

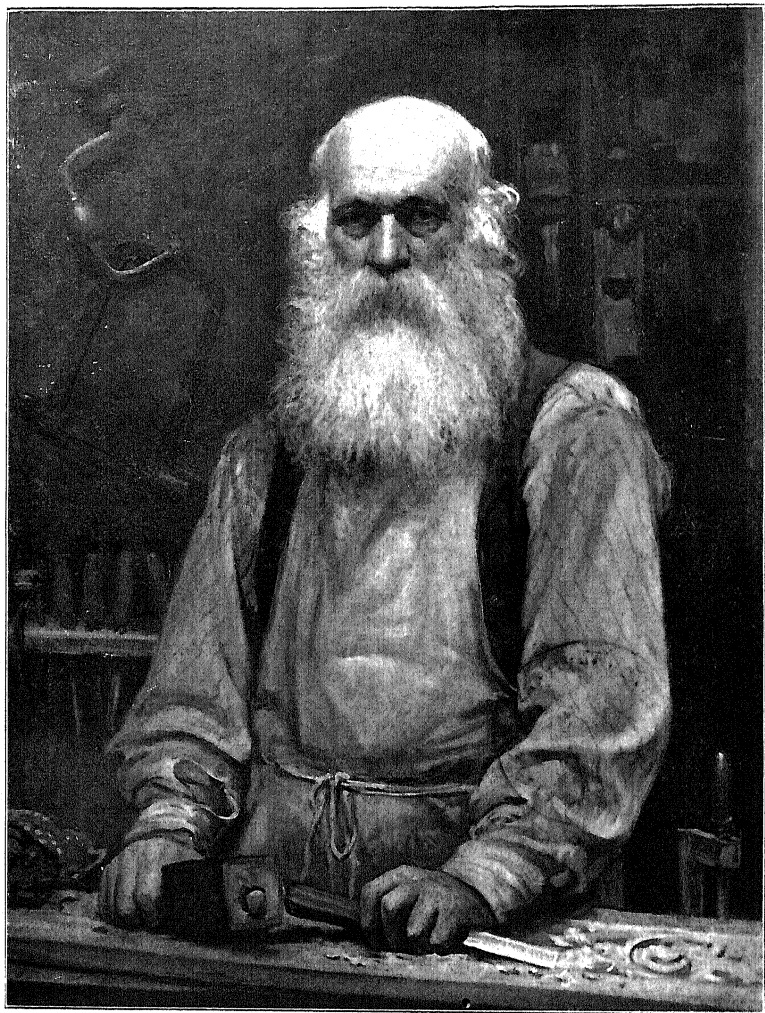
# THE HERKOMERS



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# PORTRAIT OF MY FATHER

(From my Oil Picture.)



# THE HERKOMERS

BY

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AND 'A CERTAIN PHASE OF LITHOGRAPHY'

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
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## PREFACE

A NARRATIVE so largely autobiographical as this "Record of the Family Herkomer" cannot escape a note of egotism ; a note the more pronounced in these pages by the rather unusual course I have followed of putting myself under the microscope for temperamental analysis. Given to the introspective habit—natural in the first instance, as well as early encouraged by my father—it could hardly be otherwise than that I should succumb to the temptation of self-dissection in this story. It remains for the reader to say whether I have passed the border-line of good taste.

It would be affectation on my part to pretend that I have not been successful in life. But in this record I wish to bring out into strongest relief the moral and psychological assistance I have received from my father, to whom I owe such success as much as to innate idiosyncrasy.

He recognized the flaws in my character, and made them as non-active as possible, whilst he encouraged and fostered the proclivities likely to lead me to the desired goal—and this with a wisdom that was as logical as it has proved to be far-reaching.

I make no apology, therefore, for being obsessed by this love for my father, and if I have in any way given an adequate portrait of this unique man, I shall feel that a filial duty has been performed.

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# CHAPTER I

## MY FATHER'S APPRENTICESHIP AND MASTERSHIP

WHEN my father was a lad, the medieval custom of apprenticeship to the various trade-guilds was still in vogue in Bavaria, and he was put to the trade of joiner ("Tischler") in the regular way, although in his case without premium, which unfortunately gave him an inferior position in the house of his master.

The distance from our native village, Waal, to Munich is a little over forty miles, a twenty hours' journey on foot, with rests. Walking was the usual form of locomotion; and to this day, in the south of Germany, distances are measured by "hours," an hour being equivalent to about three English miles. Such measurement is still to be seen on many a milestone.

As my grandfather had also been appren-

ticed in Munich, he was acquainted with a modest hostelry, where father and son, foot-sore and hungry, could rest for the night. The next morning, my grandfather presented the boy to his master, where he left him with the words "Sei ehrlich und fleissig"—Be honest and industrious.

Let me first give some details of that interesting man, my grandfather, since I take him as my starting-point. Farther back in the family history, I have but the scant recollections my father still retained of his childhood. He remembered vividly, however, the misery he felt when, as a boy, he had to visit his grandparents, and was made to pray the livelong day ; for these poor old people were still direct sufferers from the Thirty Years' War—that terrible page in Germany's history—and lived in perpetual fear.

My grandfather was by trade a plasterer ("Maurer"), by nature an inventor of high order. His chances for the exercise of this great gift were small indeed ; and when he left his trade to take charge of his little patrimony after the death of his father, his chances were smaller still. It was only in

making and devising locks to cupboards and gates, which no one unacquainted with the secret could open, that he was able in any way to exercise his inventive talent.

I should explain that his mother had the right to keep back one son from military service, and she chose him in preference to any one of her other sons, as they were all drunkards and gamblers. The horror with which those vices filled my grandfather was duly impressed on my father, who in his turn never touched a card, and held drunkenness as a deadly sin.

When my grandfather was about ten years old, he was made to tend horses through the night, in the open. Every now and again the horses would give a peculiar neigh, which meant that their nostrils had caught a stench that comes only from dead bodies. And there they were : human beings dangling from gibbets, on this side and on that. That is a grim picture : but fear was not in the boy. Yet these ghastly companions through the night made him think ; it was wonderment rather than fear that passed through his mind as he reflected on the scene. Whilst gazing

at the stars in the clear night he learnt—untaught—to tell the hour by their changes of position in the sky.

This boy's inventive genius was first shown in a contrivance he made for shooting down the horses' food from the loft to the manger below—an arrangement in universal use now. Later on, when he was apprenticed to his trade, he was once sent by his master with a message to a silversmith. Whilst the latter absented himself on the business of the message, the boy was left alone, when his mechanical mind became interested in a chain that was in process of making. Without more ado he began working at it, and by the time the silversmith returned he had added an inch to that chain, of a workmanship equal to that of the master.

My grandfather was nearly thirty years old when he learned to read and write. I possess a prize that he gained at the "Feiertagsschule," a book full of useful hints, moral, mechanical and domestic. It was in this book that in later years my father found a recipe for condensing milk, of which I shall have occasion to speak again.

There is no doubt that my grandfather instilled the love of things artistic into the minds of his sons, and did all in his power, as far as his limited means permitted, to foster this love. He was, as I have said, by trade a plasterer ; yet he was also a real artist by nature. There was always the "Drang" to do something artistic—yet what ? To satisfy this craving, he made those plastic groups of figures, with landscape backgrounds, of sacred subjects, so often seen in Catholic churches. He gave his boys tools, and set them to carve hands, feet, and faces for the figures. The draperies were of real fabric, which, after being dipped in liquid glue, were arranged in their proper folds and allowed to stiffen. Finally they were coloured, and embellished with gold borders. The "Nativity" was a favourite subject. The tumble-down manger, the animals, the shepherds, the Magi and the angels, all gave scope to artistic design. These pictures in relief, when finished, were presented to the church, and after being blessed by the priest, were accepted by the villagers as something sacred.

When my father was four years old, a

famine, only less severe than that which had occurred in the century before, visited many parts of Germany, and the families in and around Waal suffered terrible distress. But the mother, by a fortunate instinct, gave her children boiled oatmeal (the porridge of our day), of which meal there was a goodly supply ; yet she wept as she saw her children eagerly devour the food that she thought unfit for human beings. That trouble once passed, the life resumed its calm routine.

One is inclined to linger on this type of German village-life : a house with arable land attached to it—the freehold property of the family—with a garden of vegetables and fruit, all sufficient to yield food for the year, should no disaster occur. A craftsman, clever and ingenious, with time on his hands to make many a little home improvement, with a wise and good wife, and clever healthy children around him—free from debt—with a God and a Church he believes in ; surely this is a picture not easily surpassed, of man's wants supplied. But I believe it needs the German character to gild such a life with the elevating influence of an ideal, without which



every life would become a mere existence. But to return to my father.

It was the custom in those days—or I ought to say the law—that the apprentices of the combined trades should be taken in a body on Sunday to the three different schools : the general school (“Tagesschule”), the Sunday school (for religious instruction), and the drawing school. They were marched through the streets to the respective schools accompanied by the police ; this was not for the protection of the apprentices, but for the safety of the populace, for that species of youth from time immemorial was known to be a little devil, and up to all kinds of mischief.

The Government offered a medal for the best drawing done by an apprentice—no matter to what trade he belonged. My father showed such talent for drawing that the master was anxious for him to compete for this most coveted of all prizes, the one silver medal given in the year. But a difficulty stood in the way, and that was money. Better paper than that which was meted out gratis for the ordinary drawings in the school had to be bought : further, the rather expensive

item, Indian ink, was necessary. His father could give him no money, nor in any way subsidise him in the rather inferior position he had to take in his master's house as a non-premiated apprentice. He received of course his board and lodging, such as they were, and was taught his trade, or, rather, was allowed to pick it up as best he could in the workshop. He was put to much menial labour, however, which did not belong to the craft-room, but was of a purely domestic character, such as washing up dishes, cleaning the boots of his master and family, running on errands, and doing nurse-maid's work. Such a thing as "Trinkgeld" (tips) never came his way. Now that this system of apprenticeship has been revived in Germany, I am glad to find that governmental inspectors closely watch the masters, to see that the boys are not only taught their craft, but that they are not ill-used, or made to do work not belonging to their trade. This general protection was necessary in more ways than one, for neither workman nor master hesitated to give an apprentice blows on the smallest provocation. To this day cooks in Germany consider they

have a right to smack the faces of their kitchen-maids for faults committed in their work. I had a German cook once in Bushey who was quite surprised when informed that if she struck her kitchen-maid, she was liable to be arrested for assault. That is only a survival of the way in which apprentices were treated in the Middle Ages.

Well, my father could not compete for this medal without some pecuniary help. To his surprise that help came from his drawing-master, who supplied him with the necessary materials. The name of that generous man was Hanfstängl, a lithographer, and father of the Hanfstängls who are at the present day distinguished photographers of pictures.

The competitive drawings my father made were done in "wash," with Indian ink, but on a principle of his own invention. He mixed four distinct tones, which he placed in such a way that each tone slightly overlapped the other, producing a perfect gradation from light to dark. He never corrected or altered: although clear, precise, and accurate, his work was distinctly sympathetic.

These drawings—which are in my posses-

sion—could not fail to make their mark, and the boy gained the medal head and shoulders over the other competitors. He was told that drawings of such pre-eminence, done by an apprentice, had never before been seen.

The presentation of the prizes was made the occasion of a festival and a holiday. The masters of the various guilds assembled in the old "Rathaus." They marched in solemn procession to the big hall—preceded by a fanfare of trumpets—and took their seats according to seniority. The apprentices of the various trades came up for their prizes in batches. Now, as there was only one medal given, and that for drawing, my father had to walk up alone to receive the coveted reward from the hands of the "Bürgermeister," who presided over the whole ceremony. My father told me it was the only occasion in his life when he "did not feel his legs"—owing no doubt to his mental excitement.

From his apprenticeship he soon merged into the higher grade of "Geselle" (workman), and in due time started on his "Wanderjahre"—the freest and happiest time of his young days.

## I MY FATHER'S MASTERSHIP

This skilful workman, with knapsack strung to his shoulder, swinging his "Guild-stick" (a special cane, denoting his position as a workman of a particular guild), and walking from Munich to Paris *via* Amsterdam—is a delightful picture to contemplate! Strong and sturdy in body; a mind keenly alive to the beauties of nature; a conscience clear and unclouded; a fancy that could dictate the course of his journey—surely no life could be more enviable.

He always had enough money in hand to carry him on to the next place where work might await him; and he indignantly refused to resort to the usual methods of begging on the way. The custom for Wander-workmen to give a "fencing performance" before houses, in order to obtain money, had not yet died out when he started on his wanderings. Such performances were called "Fechten," and to this day you can hear the word used to denote begging. On his return to Munich, he made his test work for mastership. This work was said to be "unnecessarily good" for the purpose of passing, and he was proclaimed "Meister" with honour.

Thus he had passed through the various stages of his craft—so beautifully given in the old German saying :

Wer soll Lehrling sein ?

Jedermann !

Wer soll Geselle sein ?

Der was kann !

Wer soll Meister sein ?

Der was ersann !

## CHAPTER II

### SETTLEMENT OF THE YOUNG MASTER IN HIS NATIVE VILLAGE ; HIS EMIGRATION TO AMERICA

My grandfather died soon after his son became master, and as the elder brother refused to take over the patrimony, it fell to the next son, my father, to take possession. The elder was a doctor, and a most skilful anatomist, whose many preparations of the human body are still to be seen in the Anatomical Museum at Munich. He finally settled in a small village where, according to custom, he had to combine shaving the peasants with his medical practice, which latter consisted largely of blood-letting. He was an exceedingly lively, daring, and reckless fellow, absolutely without any sense of caution, which often got him into a tight corner, from which my father (who was the

only person with any influence) had to extricate him.

On taking possession, the first thing my father did was to rebuild the parental home, transforming it into a Gothic house, which, though simple in design, was architecturally correct. He had studied that period, and admired and loved the Gothic beyond all other styles. The erection of this novel piece of house-building brought down on his head the criticism, "Those Herkomers always do things differently from other people."

My father started straightway on the commission he had received from the little community to make a new altar, in Gothic style, for the church. It was an important work for a young master, and he rose to the occasion. He was one of the pioneers in the revival of the Gothic, which had been ousted by that hideous, overcharged, inorganic Baroque. In the eighteenth century nearly all the churches of Germany had been filled with this repellent form of decoration.

My father's altar was pure—if stern—in its Gothic, and was his work from first to last—design, carving, gilding, and colouring. I do



not remember his telling me of having had any assistance. The altar is there to this day—the pride of the villagers, and the chief attraction of the church.

Being now possessed of property, my father was permitted by the law to marry. The girl he loved, and made his wife, was Josephine Niggel, the daughter of a schoolmaster in a village not far distant from Waal (Denklingen). In all villages and small towns in Germany church music is conducted by the schoolmaster; and to this day he has to pass his examination in music before he can get an appointment. It follows, therefore, that in the education of a schoolmaster's children music forms an important item. From the mother's side all my relatives have been musicians, and several of my cousins have become very distinguished pianists.

A couple of years after my father's marriage—that is, in 1849—I was born. My father was still working at his altar when the newborn babe was brought in the arms of the proud old grandmother to the church for baptism. The young master watched the ceremony as he stood on the scaffolding, but

before the child was taken from the church he descended to have a peep at the little bit of humanity—his son, who was to mean so much to him in after-life. The strangely prophetic words he uttered then have been fulfilled: "This boy shall become an artist, and my best friend." It was fortunate that my father insisted on the name of Hubert being given me, as the custom was to name a child after his god-father, who in my case had the name of Xavier. Imagine going through the world with such a name! To my father, St. Hubertus suggested the romanticism of the forest, and the German pine-forest was to him the origin of Gothic architecture.

Abortive though it was, the revolution of 1848 had shaken Germany to the core. From that period, and for many years following, every man who had any feeling for freedom found Germany intolerable; and this occasioned a great exodus of the best and strongest characters to what was universally considered the land of promise and freedom, AMERICA. It was to be expected that a man of my father's temperament, one of such independent thinking, such stern rectitude, and such liberal

sympathies, should be influenced by the trend of thought that brought about a rising of the people against tyranny and injustice. The thought of emigrating, and beginning life again in the New World, haunted him. He became more and more restive, and listened less and less to the well-meaning neighbours, who tried to dissuade him from taking such a step. The strongest influence against the resolve to leave his home came from his most important and appreciative patron, who said to my father : "Such a man as you should not emigrate, for you leave Germany the poorer by your absence." This was Fürst von der Leyen, whose castle in Waal is still in the possession of his descendants. But a letter from my father's brother, John, who had already crossed the ocean, finally settled the matter, and the die was cast. The German citizenship was formally given up, the home sold, and the Fatherland left for the Great Unknown.

The few steamers that crossed to America in those days did not, so far as I am aware, take emigrants, but if they did, the fare must have been prohibitive. It was the sailing-

vessels that carried the best blood of Germany to the New World. The modern emigrant is a pampered creature. He crosses the ocean in the largest and best steamers afloat ; he is treated with consideration, has a good bed, good food without stint, and arrives at his destination in six days. The sailing-vessel in which we crossed took six weeks ! Think of it ! six weeks without seeing land ; six weeks living on salt meat, with a small amount of bread, and a cruelly small quantity of drinking-water. My father had forestalled such eventualities by condensing a quantity of milk before starting—a process he had read of in an old book of practical advice, already referred to as the prize my grandfather obtained in the “Feiertagsschule.” This condensed milk he sealed in tins much in the way in which it is now universally sold. With the small amount of drinking-water allowed daily, the mother and child received a nourishment without which perhaps neither would have reached the American shore alive. During those six weeks the devoted mother, ill as she was, never let me out of her arms. But there is an end even to a voyage across the Atlantic in

a sailing-vessel ; and the spirits rose high when those long-enduring emigrants set foot on land. It was New York at last ! Alas, there was no protection for such emigrants, no authority to save them from swindlers, who took every advantage of the “greenhorns” (as they were called), particularly of their not knowing a word of English ; and, as it happened, hardly had my father stepped on to the quay when a couple of ruffians tore from his grasp the box he was carrying, and one of them mounted it with revolver in hand, threatening to shoot my father if he did not pay so and so many dollars. It needed no understanding of the English language to comprehend the meaning of such an action, and it was not until my father had paid the sum demanded that he was allowed to proceed with his property to a lodging, where robbery took another, but equally unpleasant, form.

A few years after this date the once popular concert-room “Castle Gardens,” where Jenny Lind made her debut, was converted into a temporary asylum to give emigrants a protection from sharpers ; and thence they were

despatched to the West, where their labour was in demand.

The New World—the Land of Promise, had been reached ! All was as strange to the man and his wife as the language spoken around them. Many and bitter were the qualms of regret at having left the home in Germany ; but the step had been irrevocably taken, and the consequences had to be endured.

## CHAPTER III

SOJOURN IN AMERICA, 1851 TO 1857

THE events of the six years' sojourn in the United States have been brought to my knowledge in a fragmentary way by my parents, as I was too young to observe much for myself. There are, however, some definite impressions left on my memory.

From what my parents told me, neither the Germans nor the Irish at that period were in harmony with the Americans, and the former were always designated as "Dutch" (used as a word of opprobrium), which was no compliment to the early settlers who came from Holland, and whose descendants at the present day are proud of their ancestry ; many a young man is introduced to you in modern times as belonging to one of the "oldest families" in America. The Germans held together, talked and disputed over their

home politics, brewed their own Lager beer, established their "Turnverein," and, in fact, kept up all their German habits of life. There are quarters now in New York where you do not see an English name over a shop, or hear an English word spoken in the street.

I have a distinct recollection of our home in Cleveland. We occupied the first floor of a large building which was built in the shape of a flat-iron, and was known as "The Flat-iron Block." My father and uncle had one room for their work—the largest in the flat, and my mother established herself in one of the smaller rooms for music-teaching. There were two or three other rooms, and there was a kitchen. My recollection is of sparsely furnished rooms; of the terrible heat on summer nights, when we slept on the bare floor in the vain hope of getting a little coolness; of the exasperating bites of stinking bugs (the more aristocratic flea, not being indigenous, was hardly ever met with); of the terrible cold in winter—when we slept between straw mattresses\*to get warm; and of the snow that beat in through the imperfectly made window-sashes, and "sifted"



half across the floor—a grim contrast to the comforts that all classes have at their command in modern America. The Flat-iron Block was built of brick, but the great majority of houses, at least those of the working classes, were of wood. The latter had the one advantage of being easily moved to a different part of the town. I have a clear recollection of a house of this kind, fully furnished, with the family living in it uninterruptedly, being pulled through the streets, and it was done in this way : a windlass, worked by a horse, was fixed into the ground some fifty yards from the house, and drew the house, by means of a rope, gradually up to it. Then the windlass was moved on another fifty yards ; and the process was repeated until the new destination had been reached. It was only necessary to place such houses on wheels. But in modern times, for the removal of big houses built of stone, the whole structure is made to move on steel balls after it has been raised to the level of the road.

During those six years I have no recollection of being taught to read or write, but in music my mother soon found an apt, though

unwilling, pupil in me ; and at the age of five years I performed a solo on the piano at one of her pupil-concerts. In the workshop of my father and uncle I was allowed to potter, play, or work, as I chose.

The following description of me at that age is what I have gathered from my parents : a round face, dark complexion, with small but firm-set mouth, big black eyes, a shock of unruly hair, which was occasionally cut by my mother in the good old German fashion, by placing a pudding-dish inverted on to my head, and then cutting all the hair that projected beyond the rim, straight around from ear to ear (a form of hairdressing, by the way, affected by modern French art-students). Of an excessively restless nature, and always on the go—through a superabundance of energy that was ever getting me into mischief—I must surely have been a pickle !

During those early years my father showed apparently but little interest in me, and I was placed under the entire charge of my Uncle John, with whom I slept. But I think I can reconcile that attitude of my father towards me with the touching devotion of the later

years. He was waiting for the dawn of the *artist* and the *friend* that was *to be*. Moreover, the new life in that strange (and to him) unsympathetic country, where endless things jarred on his artistic and romantic nature, made him taciturn and stern. I certainly feared him, and clung with my little heart to Uncle John, who was so gentle and so loving to me : even my mother was not so much to me then as my uncle. This good uncle, be it told, played the guitar (by ear) and sang German songs, of which he taught me the simpler ones ; these I could sing after him very readily, and then, with a little repetition, as solos to his accompaniment, before I was four years old.

I have now a picture in my memory, of sitting on my uncle's knee in that warm kitchen on Christmas Eve, awaiting a knock at the door to signify that Santa Claus had brought the Christmas-tree and placed it in the living-room, to which I had been refused access for some hours previously. Even at that early age I seemed to have had an eye to effect, for I wanted to be *even* with this old Santa Claus, and to give *him* a surprise. I

proposed to sing a song to the uncle's accompaniment on the guitar, which I felt sure Santa Claus could hear as he passed the door. But a loud rap at the door abruptly stopped the song, and a rush was made to the room where, in German fashion, a Christmas-tree was set up, with candles burning from the branches—only candles, mark you, with none of the gewgaw stuff with which we now overcrowd a 'Christmas-tree. Underneath the tree were spread some eatables, such as cakes and nuts, and the *present* I had so longed for : thin boards, out of which I could cut various things with a fret-saw. And, oh, the sweet smell of spruce needles as they caught the flame of a candle—which to this day is a joy to me ! On such occasions my father would unbend, and enjoy it all with us ; indeed, he took the initiative in the arrangements. But it was not only for the little boy that a Christmas-tree was put up ; it was to warm the hearts of the elders, for it was Germany, was this little tree ! It was the emblem of the home they had left ! I remember my mother weeping through her smiles, as she took me lovingly on to her lap.

# PORTRAIT OF MY MOTHER.

(From my Water-colour Drawing.)



There was little chance for the father and uncle to show their craftsmanship, as in the 'fifties America was without artistic taste ; and the two brothers had to undertake anything and everything that came to hand ; life-sized effigies, carved in wood, for figure-heads to ships ; great brackets for the outsides of houses, also carved in wood, afterwards to be covered with sand to appear like stone. I also clearly remember their carving the face and hands for a Punchinello, which greatly excited me. They even undertook to paint portraits, and my uncle had a great success with a portrait of a baby, owing to the happy thought of showing the "cunning" little foot peeping out from under the little skirt. My uncle had a great gift for likeness-drawing, and made some charming pen-portraits of officers whilst he was serving his six years in the army in Germany. He was greatly in demand for these portraits, which augmented his small pay as a private ; but to paint portraits in oils without practice or training is a much more serious undertaking. Photography, which had not yet progressed beyond the daguerreotype stage, was only occasionally

available. Then both my father and his brother had erroneous ideas about the painter's art, believing that the secret lay in the ground upon which one painted, or in the method of *under-painting*. So they were always experimenting, painting little heads (without nature, of course) first on one kind of ground, then on another, each being differently prepared ; one head was under-painted green, another red, and so on. These experiments were hung out to dry in the sun, giving quite a decorative effect to the outside of the house.

Then came varnishes and oils to prepare ; and, needless to say, they ground their own colours, which they put into little bladders, with the ends tied up with string, an arrangement which has been in use from the earliest times when oil-colours were first used. This mode was only abandoned when the modern metallic tube was introduced. Lest my reader should wonder how these colours in a bladder, so tied up, could be squeezed on to the palette, I must explain that the bladder had always to be pricked with a pin, through which little hole the paint was pressed out.

How my mother obtained pupils, how she



learnt the English language, and what her special trials were, is not very clear in my memory, for I had not been told much in connection with her life at that time. That she obtained many pupils before long was not to be doubted, for I possess two or three daguerreotypes in which she is seen seated in the centre of a large group of girls, her pupils, with myself by her side. One interesting fact, however, I was told, that she received payment for her teaching of the earliest pupils in *kind*, and not in money; and this ranged from bags of potatoes to the mending of our boots. Judging, however, from the entries in her books, in which she put down every penny she had earned, from the time she settled in America to the time when I persuaded her to cease teaching, it could not have been long before she received cash for her lessons in music. She gave her yearly public concert with her pupils, in which, as I have already stated, I figured as a performer at the age of five years.

Most of the lessons my mother gave necessitated her attendance at the pupils' houses. One day, in one of those viciously

hot summers, my mother was brought home unconscious, suffering from sunstroke. It was a most serious attack, one from which, I may say, she never completely recovered to the end of her days. As for myself, I had grown but little physically, although mentally I had advanced. But it was an advancement that came from a state of neurosis, for I was an over-wrought nervous boy, and gave my parents not a little anxiety. What with my mother's impaired health, and my nervous state, my father felt it his duty to remove to some gentler climate, and decided to leave America and settle in England.

## CHAPTER IV

FIRST YEARS IN ENGLAND : FROM 1857

How my father's resources stood at the end of his six years' sojourn in America I cannot say, for such details were not told me. Knowing the work he had had to accept, I am prepared to admit that they could not have been in a particularly flourishing condition. However, there was evidently enough money to undertake the journey to England and to pay the initial expenses of a settlement in a new country. The ocean was this time crossed in a steamer, but I remember nothing of this journey beyond the particular *smell* of that steamer. I must have had rather an abnormally sensitive nose, for I had often been able to identify the owners of certain gloves that pupils left in my mother's music-room. Probably I inhaled the peculiar redolence of the pupils, because I was jammed in

between two of them at a piano in a six-hand piece—a very favourite form of showing off the skill of pupils in those days. It was not a happy position for me, for those were the days of crinolines, which practically submerged me in their spreading capacity ; and well I remember pushing down, on either side, the projecting flounces with my elbows whilst playing the middle and most difficult parts of the various pieces.

There was no intention at first, I believe, of our remaining in Southampton ; and before anything was decided, my father thought he would like to see London. We therefore made the journey to London for sight-seeing, and found some lodgings—a cheap tavern kept by a German—in a little alley out of Soho Square. It is curious that, strong as some of my early impressions are of events before we left America, this visit to London has left absolutely nothing in my memory, except the hoarse roar of the traffic, unknown in these days of wood-pavements. On our return to Southampton, my father decided to stay in that town, simply on the premise that the people were well-dressed, that is to say,

in comparison with the Americans of the same class. This, he argued, must mean affluence, and affluence, in an old country like England, must mean a taste for the arts. It was not long before he was disillusioned, for he soon came to know that the people spent most of their money on their appearance, which left nothing for any expenditure in the arts, even if they had had the taste for things artistic, which, to his disadvantage, he found they did not possess.

The real story of my life begins from this date; the story of the development of a temperament made for a stormy existence, a temperament that ran to extremes in all things, with abnormal ambition and abnormal energy, but handicapped by poverty, as well as by a mental defect—the want of application. Those characteristics that I described in the small boy in America increased in their intensity with the added years, and if I had not had such a wise, considerate, and understanding guide as my father became to me, I dread now to think what turn my idiosyncrasy might eventually have taken.

If things and events left but imperfect impressions on my mind before this date, it was within a few months of our settling in Southampton that my mind *took in* all that happened, and the potential meaning of these happenings. Thus the struggles of my parents against adverse circumstances have been "indented" in my memory, never to be wholly erased.

If America was without artistic taste in the 'fifties, England, with less excuse, was little better. Should my reader be old enough, he will remember that the absence of artistic taste in the applied arts was general throughout this country. There was no carpet that was not outrageous or vulgar in pattern and garish in colour; no wall-paper that was not inartistic or downright hideous; and no ornaments for the mantelpiece that were not childish. Flowers made of feathers, fruit made of wax, both sacredly kept under glass covers, were the fashion. There was of course the ubiquitous antimacassar; and a material for the covering of chairs and sofas, made of horsehair, was considered the height of style. In my motoring about the country I have

still found this kind of furniture in little wayside inns.

Well, after our brief London visit, having decided to stay in Southampton, my father took a house in a small street, Windsor Terrace ; he bought some second-hand furniture, just sufficient for the time being, as he intended to make something artistic for the home. His first work was to paint an artistic design on a wire-gauze screen, which was to cover the lower half of the window facing the road. On this screen—which he decorated with scrolls that included little figures playing on musical instruments—he wrote the words, “ Madame Herkomer, Teacher of Music.” For my father’s work a little back room was arranged, and it was in this room that I received my education, at the bench of the unique man who became my teacher, my guide, and my friend. My father felt it imperative to produce a specimen of his work, in order to show his skill as a carver. He therefore made a Gothic writing-desk, in the form of a cabinet. When finished, he offered it to the one firm in the town that had to do with the decoration and furnishing of

houses. But they would not buy a piece of furniture so different in style from the commercial article demanded by the public. They did the next best thing, however, and placed it in their shop-window for exhibition. The price my father asked for this masterpiece of craftsmanship was only *five pounds*. But it remained in the window for weeks without bringing so much as an offer.

Another painful surprise awaited my father when he settled in England, as he found that there was but little less prejudice against foreigners than in America. My mother certainly suffered from this prejudice, for she found it difficult to get pupils. It was not until it became known what a gift she possessed for teaching, and what an unbounded love she had for young people, that they came in greater numbers to her. Even I, as a boy, was under this bane of prejudice, and I well remember a horse-dealer and job-master—whose stables were at the end of the street—who never failed when he met me to call me such names as “Dutchman,” “Foreigner,” “Roman Catholic,” “Brigand,” “Vagabond,” “Half-caste,” etc.



Months were passing, and the little capital in hand was reaching its lowest ebb. With few pupils for my mother, and no work for my father, things looked black indeed. I, too, gave my parents a great deal of trouble. It was not from wilful disobedience—as I now see it—that I was so unmannerly ; it was not from want of love for father and mother : it arose from inordinately high spirits, combined with excessive energy, with insufficient opportunity to work them off. In the desperate way I ran and jumped—when playing with the other boys—I tore up the soles of my boots, and tore the very clothes from my back. All the remonstrance—even chastisement—I received could not keep me within bounds ; and my violence of temper did not make it the easier for my parents to deal with me.

My clothes were now mostly past mending ; therefore—in addition to other troubles—a certain inevitable expense, that decency demanded, was staring my parents in the face. This was not a trifling incident, as it is only in modern times that cheap ready-made clothes have been obtainable for boys.

In those days clothes were dear, and always meant a formidable item of expenditure to a family in our circumstances. Yet something *had* to be done. Of money in hand, there was barely enough for rent and food. The only alternative was to convert something already in our possession to this use. Now, it so happened that my father had a cloak of good cloth—a garment he had acquired when he became a master-craftsman in Germany ; it was a possession he prized and loved. Often have I heard him sing a folk-lore song, in which an old soldier of the Thirty Years' War extols the virtue of his cloak—the many campaigns they had been through together, and the friendly warmth that cloak had given him in many a wintry night.

Schier dreissig Jahre bist du alt, hast manchen  
Sturm erlebt,  
Hast mich wie ein Bruder beschützt,  
Und wenn die Kanonen geblitzt,  
Wir beide haben niemals gebebt.

There was no help for it : that beloved cloak had to be sacrificed to furnish the material for a suit that would again make me look respectable. It was given by my father

without a murmur. He remarked that he could dispense with it if he walked a little more briskly when he took his daily constitutional after dark—for he had no overcoat to replace that garment.

Then came the season of Christmas, which, in England of all countries in the world, is that of goodwill to men. But it found our home joyless. Boy as I was, and wildly as I seem to have behaved, that joylessness, in some way or other, burned itself into my very being. The pity of it all has never left my memory. But when matters seemed at their worst, a gleam of light penetrated the gloom of our existence, and showed us the kind hearts that were near. Some neighbours, by name Griffiths, knowing of our distress, pressed on my parents a loan of £5. Part of the loan came from a young German clerk, who was then lodging with them. Later on, this good man, out of sheer kindness of heart, gave me German lessons during his dinner-hour, and shared with me his pudding or tart (as I was not used to eating meat) when I had been specially good and attentive. This was the late Mr. Francis Keller, afterwards Consul in Southampton

for the German Empire, a man greatly honoured in the town.

In exchange for music-lessons, a pupil of my mother's taught me reading and writing, in which I was very backward at the age of eight. But it was soon thought necessary that I should attend a day-school with other boys, and the school which I joined was kept by a Mr. Monk. In the spring of 1907, having ascertained that he was still alive, I paid him a visit. We had not met since I left his school, but he had closely watched my career, and his delight in seeing me was very great. Looking round his little sitting-room, I saw hanging on the walls certain water-colour drawings, mostly copies from chromo-lithographs, that I had painted for the monthly competition in drawing in his school. A special arrangement had to be made for me that gave me always the highest marks without interfering with the real school-competition, as Mr. Monk considered that my "superior skill" put the other boys at too great a disadvantage. There also, on the mantelpiece, were the "flowers made of feathers, and fruit made of wax"; nor must

I forget the ever-present antimacassar. That little room gave me a touching glimpse into the past.

I grasped the new chance of acquiring knowledge at Mr. Monk's school with my usual enthusiasm, so much so that I overdid it, became exaggeratedly excited, lost my appetite and my sleep, and fell ill. This was after only six months' attendance at Mr. Monk's school. Six months!—the sum-total of my life's school-education!

But I had a teacher; and the viva voce education that accompanied work at my father's bench was incomparably more valuable to my peculiar temperament than any other form of education, for it was a means of developing, above all things, the power of reflecting. Endless were the questions I asked from morning to night, and lucid and direct were the answers I received. To this education my father devoted his life, and it was this duty (as he felt it) rather than his pride (as people thought) that prevented him from seeking a position as an ordinary workman. In that little room, and under those narrowed circumstances, my father's life-dream was instilled

into my nature : the dream of a great house built by the family ! The question of money wherewith to build this house never entered our thoughts ; it was *going* to be *done*, that was enough. Call it fanaticism, or what you will : it was a *vision* clearly seen in the very darkness of our life at that time. This house stands now in actuality, as a monument to the “seer,” and to the two brothers who, with him, must be considered its makers.

## CHAPTER V

### EARLY YEARS IN ENGLAND (*continued*)

POSSIBLY at this distance of time my memory may play me false. I must, however, give the events of the past as I remember them, and interpret them as I understand their meaning now.

Looking back, I certainly can understand the mental condition of the boy ; but that of the parents is more complex. Happy they were not : how could they be ? The class of people with whom they came in contact began, in unmistakable terms, to express their disapproval of an art career for me, which gave unrest to my mother, and caused resentment in my father. These people no doubt meant well enough ; but they instilled into my mother's mind the prevalent idea that the profession of an artist was of doubtful respectability, and that starvation was sure to follow.

My father, holding stubbornly to his resolve regarding my future, was considered an eccentric, nay, even a wicked man. My mother, not understanding art, could not but listen to people who held such opinions of the artist. When they further pointed out what an advantage it would be to me if I could be taken into the Ordnance Survey Office in the town, where after forty years' service I should be entitled to a pension, my father lost his patience, and gave his answer definitely in the words : "My son shall never be a slave." Such outer influences on the mother were not conducive to a harmony between man and wife, and I seem to remember my mother constantly in tears, and my father (though kind and courteous) getting more and more silent. I also remember that his temper increased in its irascibility ; and with all his self-control and determined spirit, one could see in his face how much he suffered in trying to do what he considered right for *me*, and the effort it cost him to adhere to his plan.

The difficulty of making ends meet, even with the increase of pupils to my mother,



remained the daily anxiety. In this congested state of things, my father took the desperate resolve, in order to lessen the expenses of our life, of giving up meat, alcoholic drinks, and smoking—not by gradual steps, but at once. He did not impose the total abstinence and vegetarianism on my mother: she had her meat, and the glass of “half-and-half” at her meals. I followed my father enthusiastically, and wanted to share the glory of his manly renunciation.

It was not many months before a remarkable change came over my father. Although he looked paler, and had become thinner, the irascibility of his temper had practically disappeared. He was equable and gentle in his moods, which the people, who attacked him afresh for his dietetic change, could scarcely disturb. In those days, be it told, teetotallers were objects for scoff, and non-meat-eaters for ridicule. That a more nitrogenous diet was necessary for my constitution can be asserted with truth; but the total abstinence from alcohol can be declared as having been my salvation. I can see only too plainly now what a habit of taking alcoholic drinks would

have meant to my temperament through all my strenuous years. Having always forced work into a given time, the temptation to resort to a stimulant in order to be assisted over certain periods would have been too great to resist ; and I am prepared to say that moderation in its use would at times have been hardly possible. I have every reason to be thankful for my father's example in at least this direction. I remained an abstainer from alcohol until I was nearly fifty years old.

Well, under the new regime my father became quietly happy. He sang his songs whilst at work with an enjoyment that had a touch of youthfulness in it, and all things were easier to bear. It must be also told that the *saving on himself* made a marked difference in the weekly expenditure ; the little income went further than before.

About this time a dealer and restorer of old pictures in the town, having heard of my father as a man who could do most things, engaged him to back-line and restore old, dirty, and ragged canvases, purporting to be Old Masters—for which there was a great

rage at the time. Anybody who had a dark, brown, or cracked picture rushed to the restorer in the hope of finding it turn out to be an Old Master. The first thing my father had to do was to clean half a picture (a portrait), making the division between the clean and the remaining dirty side come down the centre of the face. This work was congenial to my father: it paid well, and he earned from two to four pounds a week. Moreover, it brought within his reach an occasionally well-painted figure, which he would copy for his own pleasure. This pleasure-work he only indulged in on Sundays. The little glimpse of better conditions, alas! was only to last a short time, for the dealer became bankrupt, and the dirty old pictures were sold and scattered.

Let me describe our life in that little house, which varied but slightly from day to day. To me, as a boy, this house seemed quite large in its way, and great was my surprise when, after many years, I knocked at the door and asked the occupier of the house to let me see the front room. I found it of miniature dimensions.

If I had forgotten the size of that little front music-room, the smallness of the kitchen has remained in my memory in its true dimension—no doubt on account of the occasion when my father one day explained to me the convenience of being able to reach three of the four walls while sitting in the middle of the room. The fourth wall, where the window was located, was slightly beyond the reach, which gave sufficient space for the small table that was used for our meals. But there is another incident that happened in that kitchen, which has clung to my memory. The conversation—brought about, I believe, by a stupid tumble I had had—was turned to account by my father, who gave me a physical demonstration of the *art of falling*. How well I remember my fright as he fell in various ways on to the floor, with barely a foot of space to spare for his whole length; yet he did this without the least damage to himself. It seemed horrible to me, and was still more so to my mother. As I instinctively rushed to pick him up, he rose quickly with a merry laugh, and, needless to say, without my help. For days after that I practised

falls, until I had so many sore bones that my father thought (as he expressed it) that I had sufficiently *grasped the principles*.

My parents rose at six A.M., but I was allowed to remain in bed a little longer. My mother then did a certain amount of house-work that needed the woman's touch. After my father had lighted the fire in the kitchen, and put on the kettle, he swept the front door-step and the pavement in front of the house. I did not like him to do this work, for it exposed him to the curious gaze of the passing folk, and I can recall the feelings that hurt my boyish heart (which was then already so full of admiration for him) as I saw him at that menial task. My mother undertook this cleaning of the door-step whilst in America, but my father would not allow it in England, where, he soon found, there was much snob-bishness amongst the people with whom we came in contact. I said I did not like my father doing door-step cleaning, and grumbled a good deal, for I had an irritating way of worrying others about things that displeased me. But when my father said: "Well, sonny (an Americanism), will *you* do it?" the

thing appeared to me in a new and not very acceptable light. I *did* do it for a day or two; but in my anxiety not to be seen at the task, I swept those stones in such a perfunctory way that my father had to resume the duty again.

My mother's day was entirely occupied with her pupils from breakfast to bed-time, leaving but short respites in which to take her meals. Therefore it devolved on my father and myself to do household work: cooking, washing up dishes, keeping the kitchen clean, answering the front door—my task mostly—and so on. In washing up dishes, my father never thrust his hands into the hot water, but in the most artistic way manipulated the little soft loose rag with the end of a short stick around the plate or dish, holding the part that projected beyond the water between the first finger and thumb of the left hand. To me was allotted the drying task, as I had broken too many things in the washing process.

After breakfast I was sent out, with a large basket on my arm, to buy provisions. On these errands I got sometimes a little mixed

with the money-change given me at the different shops, and could not always account for the exact cost of the different articles, for in arithmetic I never did shine ; and even to this day I have never mastered my multiplication table. Curiously enough, although I strongly objected to being seen with a broom in my hand sweeping the front door-step, I did not in the least mind being seen with a provision-basket. I felt I was a purchaser ; I patronized shops ! Moreover, I was frequently the recipient of favours from shopkeepers. At the grocer's I got a fig or a date ; at the greengrocer's a handful of nuts, a pear, or an apple (generally slightly rotten) ; at the butcher's a stray sausage or a kidney. On my return there was a certain preparation of food in the kitchen—peeling potatoes, preparing other vegetables, and putting the beef in the saucepan to boil. The latter was to make the soup, which no German can dispense with at a mid-day meal. And the meat, which had been boiled to give out its essence for this soup, was practically the only animal food we had.

A noteworthy education went on in that

kitchen. In the first place, manners at table seemed to my father of great importance, and he insisted on my mother and myself sitting down with him at least for the midday meal, and making it, even in our simple home, a ceremonial occasion. Now it was not easy for me as a boy to sit still anywhere for any length of time, and it would have been difficult for me to sit out a long meal had it been at a king's table. As for my mother, she was always in great haste to get back to her pupils, consequently both she and I bolted our food—for two different reasons. My father did all he could to rectify this habit of ours, on moral and hygienic grounds, but alas ! to little purpose. In his own manners he gave us a good precept ; but the deliberate way in which he took his food was at times to us exasperating. However, I must have gathered the real meaning of sitting together to break bread, for it forms the subject of the wall-decoration in the dining-room of my present house.



## CHAPTER VI

### EARLY YEARS IN ENGLAND (*continued*)

I HAVE said that I was sent out on errands ; but I was often away too long, and I grieve to say, told more than one lie to justify my prolonged absence. I deceived my parents as to the real cause ; and had the final explanation not come so unexpectedly I might have had a good thrashing. The truth was that whilst out once on my purchasing rounds some boys beguiled me into following them to the free baths, as it was high tide. I started swimming ; and what youth does not know the excitement of first learning to swim ? Naturally, the next day, and the days that followed, at the hour when I knew the tide would be up I sneaked round to the baths, and soon learned to swim and to dive. One day, entirely forgetting my deception, I asked my father to come and see me swim ! This was letting the cat out of the

bag with a vengeance. Having forbidden me to bathe, my father looked at me, and said, "When did you learn to swim?" Then I had to make a clean breast of it. But my father, seeing in the little incident what a clumsy liar I was, smilingly answered that he would come one day. I was wildly happy, for I wanted his praise. He came with me to a swimming bath for which an entrance fee of twopence was charged. Seeing the little boys swim about him as he was standing in the shallow water, he, too, got the desire to learn this art, and at the age of fifty he began to swim, and was able very soon to cover a respectable distance.

As I have already stated, my work at my father's bench was much interrupted by my various duties. But as I could not stick long at anything, I was the more ready to jump from one occupation to another. I was in a considerably excited state: I never walked downstairs, but slid down the balustrade from top to bottom in one slide (not a very great distance, perhaps); I seldom walked, but nearly always ran. I moved in spasmodic jerks; in fact, I exhibited my neurotic temperament in

every movement. The continuance of this readiness to jump from one thing to another made my watchful father form the conclusion that it was not wholly my superabundance of energy that caused me to commence so many things and finish nothing, but that it arose from a mental deficiency—the want of *application*. In recalling certain things he said to me, and the ways he employed to re-interest me in work begun, I can clearly see now that after this discovery he set himself systematically to cure me of this mental weakness ; and it was so subtly and dexterously done that I did not realize I was under special treatment.

This system was as effectual as it was simple. Sometimes, when I had, perhaps, three or four little carved animals in progress of making, which I dropped for the copying of an engraving or a chromo-lithograph that had just seized my fancy, he would take up one of these commenced animals, and quietly go on carving at it. First my curiosity was aroused ; then before long I itched to go on with it myself, when he would give it over to me without a word. In this way, everything I began was eventually finished. When I was about

fourteen, he divulged his method and the reason for employing it, urging me to continue it myself, as he knew that talent, without the power of continuing an effort, would produce little or nothing.

Although he intended me to be an artist, he never regulated my artistic work. The desire to do this or that was the outcome of my own momentary impulse, which he never thwarted. Probably he did not know how a painter was trained. In his whole life he had only known one artist, the painter of the central panel of the altar he made for Waal. This artist belonged to the Overbeck school of painters of religious subjects, and was "academically trained," and a faithful adherent to the "sweetly religious sentiment" that was made popular by Overbeck and others at that time. I suspect it was owing to the influence of this man that my father got the erroneous idea that the whole secret of art depended on the *ground* on which one painted, or on how one under-painted in complementary colours.

The phrase "academically trained" puts me in mind of a conversation I overheard in the Old Pinakothek Gallery when I was first

taken to Munich in 1865, which may be inserted here. I visited that gallery most assiduously. One day I was interested in watching one of those uniformed porters whose duty it is to clean the galleries before they are opened, and afterwards to walk round the rooms and keep an eye on the visitors. He was stealthily following a country priest from room to room. At last he got his opportunity to open a conversation, and carefully led up to the fact that he copied pictures. "So you are a painter," said the priest. "Oh ! yes," was the answer, "a painter, and *academically trained* !" I distinctly remember the shock this answer produced on me. A painter, academically trained, yet to be still a porter in a gallery, and dressed in livery—was this what was in store for me ?

But I must return to my narrative, which has not yet gone beyond my twelfth year. I wish to dwell on this period, as it was the dawn of a certain love of mysticism that has increased, rather than diminished, with the years. By mysticism I do not mean that adjunct to religious exaltation, or that practice in occult science so-called, but rather the

“mood” occasioned by the contemplation of some object or some scene, or even by a self-imposed *mental image* which, by a co-ordination of the many faculties of the brain, produces what the Germans call “Stimmung,” for which we only have the inadequate word “mood.” It so happened that the house in Windsor Terrace was the central one in the row, and had a kind of gabled roof. The space under this roof was used by my father for the storage of all manner of things which he had taken from Germany to America, and thence to England. There were steel engravings after religious pictures, issued by a Society for the dissemination of such works in Germany, woodcuts of various kinds from newspapers and German “*Bilderbogen*,” casts, paint-pots, and what not. I loved to ruminate amongst these things; it seemed an inspiring atmosphere to me. The religious engravings interested me least. There were just two items that fascinated me and which I contemplated for hours. To this day I can feel the mood which they occasioned in me at that time. The one was a woodcut representing a deserted garden. The ruins of a Rococo

palace, overgrown with creeper, were seen in the distance. The garden still showed that there was once an orderly plan of paths and flower-beds, but it was now a wilderness of wilful growth of flower and weed. A sundial, ivy-covered, still stood; and grass grew where it was once carefully eradicated by human hands. There was a poetic melancholy in the whole scene that fired my imagination. To symbolize the glory of the past the artist had produced in the foreground a group of beautiful fruits of all kinds, by the side of which stood a peacock with spreading tail. The other item was a photograph from an engraving, and was of an entirely different character. It represented something unreal and impossible: floating figures of beautiful women who, in circles and hand-in-hand, were moving, without natural volition, around an island in a lake. The head of the central figure came across the great moon, giving her a nimbus of mystic significance. These figures incarnated the witchery of twilight. But they meant more to me than that: they meant woman, spiritualized, entering for the first time the conscious mind of the advancing boy.

These figures did not represent the dead to me: they were to me beings who could breathe, who could speak, and who *did* speak to me—beings that could have touched me. I gave each figure a name: and only thought of each by name: they became a part of my undeveloped boy-life. Unsecretive as my nature always was, I nevertheless kept all this a secret from my father. I felt I could not explain, and I dreaded lest his sound judgment would destroy my dream and leave a void that I thought I could not endure. And now for the sequel of this infatuation, which I give as a problem for psychologists to solve: Is it a mere coincidence that the central figure of the group in that scene should have become the type of all the female figures in my life's allegorical and decorative work? I think not. It had a deeper meaning.



## CHAPTER VII

### EARLY YEARS IN ENGLAND (*continued*)

MY real joy was in my father's little workshop. If there was no commissioned work, my father had always something on hand that interested me, and he never failed to give me instruction in the things that I wished to do. He gave me the use of his tools, advised me in the carving of little animals, which I copied from a book of engravings of animal life (given me by a lady pupil of my mother's), in the making of cross-bows, which always had a bit of carving on the stock, in the making of kites and even of cricket-bats. He would say : "I cannot buy you anything, but I will help you to make what you want." In consequence of this help from my father, I became a most important personage amongst my boy friends, for they came to me to mend their kites and the broken handles of their

bats. I had another, and rather strange reputation, quite apart from this practical side, that of being able to entertain my boy friends with stories of the most fanciful, unreal, and impossible kind, always invented on the spur of the moment—the moment when they were required; and I found that the more impossible and outrageous they were, the greater the approval. In our daily converse I sometimes told my father these stories, and he evidently saw a certain power of mental image-making awakening in me, of which he knew the importance for an artist. Instead of disparaging this form of mental exercise, he at once encouraged it. In fine weather he sent me to the Southampton Common for the day, when I took with me a little lunch, consisting of brown bread and nuts. Although, at his request, I also took painting materials with me, he urged me rather to sit in the thicket and dream dream-pictures, scenes—anything; but he was always careful to insist that I should “visualize” my thoughts so definitely that I could tell him clearly what I had evolved in my imaginative brain. I have continued this exercise throughout my life,

and it has been of unspeakable benefit to my career.

These details of my training will possibly be considered trivial, but it will perhaps be allowed as an excuse for my relating them that I think they may be of real service to other ardent lads struggling for light in an artistic direction.

Our life coursed on from day to day with but little variety ; my work consisted of toy-making, copying engravings in water-colours (always consulting my father as to the colouring), dreaming and sketching in the secluded parts of the common, assisting my mother with her pupils, and performing at her concerts—the latter being very much to my taste. In these concerts I had not only to play on the piano, but had to sing songs, dressed up in certain costumes, which necessitated a little acting.

I may mention that I had a first-rate voice as a boy, and could reach the high C with ease. I cannot remember how I learnt music, nor do I remember having ever practised, but, somehow or other, I could always do what was required of me. Sometimes a visitor

would come, and I was shown off with my voice by my mother. This was quite to my liking, as I was always ready for praise, and always ready to cause a surprise when an occasion gave me the chance. Such visitors would sometimes give me the smallest silver coin of the realm—I think a fourpenny-bit in those days. It happened at times that I obtained such a coin for a drawing, which elated me even more. Thus it was that my rewards, being equally divided between music and art, caused no disappointment to either of the parents. These small rewards I was always allowed to spend as I pleased.

My father received but few commissions. But one—a Gothic armchair, to be made out of old oaken beams taken from an ancient church—was a happy opportunity for him. He also enjoyed giving carving lessons to a private gentleman. Otherwise the only stock-jobs that came his way were the so-called “Oxford frames,” at that time so popular for the framing of engravings. He was paid only seven-and-sixpence for one of imperial size—inclusive of material.

When the loan of five pounds—of which I

have spoken—had been paid off by instalments, my father felt justified in spending half a crown at Christmas time. For six months we talked of how this sum could be laid out to the greatest advantage, and—as my parents put it—to give me the greatest pleasure. If my memory serves me rightly, one shilling was spent on the Christmas number of the *Illustrated London News*, one shilling on a Christmas tree—which sum included the wax candles—and sixpence on nuts. In one Christmas number there was a reproduction in chromo-lithography of an English landscape that specially appealed to me. This was after a picture by B. W. Leader, who years after became a great friend of mine, and a brother Academician.

When I had reached the age of fourteen, my father thought it advisable that I should join the Southampton School of Art. This was in 1863-4. The master belonged to the first batch of artists who obtained positions in art schools connected with the South Kensington system. He was a tolerably well-educated man, but a poor artist; and I think he was the worst judge of art I have ever

come across. Under his tuition I was first put to copy those outlines of antique figures, after which I was advanced to drawing from the cast. The shading had to be done in the orthodox manner of "chalk-stippling." This process demanded a needle-point sharpness to the chalk, likewise an excessive use of bread. My vigour, combined with my impatience, made the sharpening of those chalks a torture. I did not mind the wasting of the bread, knowing that the charwoman who cleaned the schools daily fed her chickens on the *blackened bread* that she swept up from the floor.

For a drawing of the head of Michael Angelo's "Moses" I obtained a bronze medal.

From what I heard afterwards, I do not think I won that medal fairly and squarely. An Academician, who was inspector of these schools at that time, was, I believe, persuaded by the master to award me this prize, on the ground that as I was going to study art in Germany it would be an advertisement to the school if I could take this medal with me.

The teaching in that school was stupid and worthless; and what was particularly bad in

my case happened to be the fact that it did not confine itself to the hours when I attended there, as the master gave me his water-colour drawings to take home for copying. Amateurish to the last degree, these drawings were not likely to inspire me. My copies were hastily done, and this often got me into a hopeless muddle. One day, after a particularly obvious failure, my temper got the better of me, and I began smashing things about the room. My mother, hearing the noise, came up from her music-room, and seeing the state of things commenced to cry ; I cried from rage, she from sympathy. My father, who followed, looked on very calmly. He understood me, and grasped the situation. Then my mother persuaded him to try to help me. I see my dear father now, carefully examining my muddle, and in the most deliberate way setting to work to paint in the parts I had washed out in my rage. Slowly and cautiously he imitated, bit by bit, the touches of the original. This deliberation was too much for me, and I declared, with tears still streaming down my cheeks, " Oh, I could do it *slow* like that ! " He smiled, and getting up, said, " Very well,

sonny." I resumed the copying madly, not slowly, however, but working at white heat, and succeeded.

In this school it happened that I fell under the influence of a fellow-student who attended the evening classes—being employed in the day-time as an engraver. At that time I had read no art books; indeed, if I had heard of any, my parents were too poor to buy them. But this student spent every spare penny in the purchase of such works, and, what is of greater importance, read them! I listened to all he told me as if it were gospel. More than half he read to me I did not understand, especially when it came to Ruskin's *Modern Painters*. But I thought it all wonderful, and drank eagerly at the fountain.

My companion showed me the landscapes he had painted from nature (inspired by his readings), which to me seemed most extraordinary in colour—all the shadows being *purple*. Questioning their correctness, I got for answer that *Ruskin considered purple a healthy colour!* That settled the question: henceforth, all my shadows were to be purple—whether I saw them thus in nature or not.



I was stricken with "Purplitis," from which it took me years to recover. Symptoms of this disease adhered to me when in after-years I was infatuated with Walker, for I could plainly discern the "healthy" purple in his work. I had been partially cured; but a relapse—and a bad one—occurred many years after, when I painted my picture called "Missing."

The time had now arrived when my father thought it imperative that I should enter on my art education seriously, and he chose Munich for that purpose. He had received a commission from his brother in America to carve the four Evangelists, life-size, after the small statuettes by Peter Vischer. This work, he thought, could be done in Germany; and the money his brother advanced him on the commission would pay the initial expenses of travel and living during the first few months. Having settled my mother in the house of her sister, where she could continue her lessons, my father and I started for the Bavarian Capital—my mind all excitement and hope.

## CHAPTER VIII

### JOURNEY TO MUNICH, 1865

THAT my father should choose the cheapest route to Germany was not only natural, but imperative. But how he came to select the one we actually took, or who recommended it, I cannot recollect. Stray remarks from acquaintances in Southampton were probably all he had to rely on, and each one no doubt recommended some particular route. The shipping people could certainly tell him the cheapest vessel in which to cross the Channel ; and they did, too ; the cheapest and most uncomfortable. It was one of those small vessels that plied between Southampton and Antwerp with cargoes of live sheep. There was one solitary passenger besides my father and myself, and no more. Whether there was a cabin or not I cannot say : I only remember walking the small deck around the

hatchway during a night that seemed interminable, fighting sea-sickness, but, alas, without success, as the densely-packed sheep below in the hold (which was open at the top) sent up a horrible, hot, mutton smell, that soon settled any doubts as to the probability of getting sea-sick. These sheep were packed like herrings: you could hardly have thrust a hand between them; and judging from the sounds, nearly all must have suffered dreadfully.

Of our one day in Antwerp I have but a hazy recollection—of seeing, in one of the churches, Rubens' ceiling, which he is said to have painted entirely with his own hand in fourteen days.

Our journey took us through Alsace and Lorraine, and I have reason to remember that journey—in a fourth-class carriage—through those provinces! The company in that "cattle-van" (for it was little better) was so disgusting and riotous, their habits so filthy and foul, the air so laden with stench of all kinds, that I dare not describe it in detail here. Suffice it that I swore a great oath, that when I should be successful in the future,

I would never travel without availing myself of every comfort obtainable, even if the cost "broke the bank" (N.B.—not the exact wording of the oath). I have kept that oath, however, for in travelling I am distinctly extravagant. Further, I remember on the journey great bare waiting-rooms at stations where we dragged out the weary hours through the night surrounded by, and lying on, our carpet-bags and bundles, waiting for another slow, cheap train that would carry us farther the next morning. It was not possible to get refreshments in the stations. Perhaps beer was to be obtained, but we were strict teetotallers: perhaps sausages, but we were vegetarians. The journey pictures itself to my mind as something horrible in its discomforts.

We finally arrived at a small village near Kempten, in Bavaria—a slight detour my father made in order to visit the old mother of my uncle Wurm, who had joined us in England with his wife, as music-teachers. But there was something about that good woman's face that frightened me, and, despite her friendliness and offer of hospitality, I

could not be induced to stay in her house. It was a morbid fancy, and soon the reason for it became clear; I was sickening for an illness. My father suspected this, and thought it all the more advisable to stay with the old lady, in order to put me under some immediate treatment. But no! I was half crazy to get away, and begged and prayed that we might return to Kempten.

Now the journey to Kempten meant a two-hours' walk in the dark night; and I had not gone far before I began to regret my insistence. I was compelled to cling to my father's arm for support, as my legs, in some strange way, seemed as if separated from my body; my mind was in a sort of comatose state, as I but imperfectly heard my father's voice—it seemed so far away; in fact, I was practically asleep whilst walking. On arrival at the little hotel in Kempten I was promptly put to bed, and wrapped in wet sheets, for I was, as my father recognized, in a high fever. As it happened, the small cheap rooms that we ought to have occupied were under repair, and the landlord put us in his best room without any extra charge. No doctor was called

in. In the first place, we had no money to pay for a doctor, and in the second, my father only believed in hydropathy, a form of therapeutics not yet generally accepted. As long as I can remember, my father had been doctor and nurse for my mother and myself, and had treated every ailment according to a little book written by that "inspired peasant" Priessnitz, on the so-called Water Cure. The well-known Father Kneipp, who established a sanatorium at Wörishofen, in Bavaria, for the treatment of disease by various forms of hydropathy, was led to it by reading a copy of this very book. He came across it accidentally, as he was looking for manuscripts in the library of his university; and by following certain precepts for the treatment of dyspepsia, cured himself of his complaint. Having the natural gift of diagnosis, he began to cure others, until his village became a place of pilgrimage for all classes—from princes to paupers. When I was three years old there was an epidemic of dysentery in Cleveland, America. My father applied his water-cure treatment to my case and refused to call a doctor. This decision was a grave

responsibility, which he fully realized. But the result of his treatment justified his belief in it: I recovered with a rapidity and a completeness that was a painful surprise to the neighbours who had lost one or more of their children by this terrible scourge.

What my illness was I do not know, but presumably it was some vicious form of gastritis. The fever was got under in a couple of days; but oh! when my mind cleared—to see the face of my poor father! The enforced stay was eating into our slender means, and there was no knowing when I should be strong enough to proceed. This doubt, added to the pity and sympathy he felt for me, made him look an old man! Although he never breathed other than comforting words to me, I could plainly read his mental suffering in his face.

Then around the walls were hung engravings of the most depressing subjects. One, in a direct line of sight as I lay in bed, represented a woman with a baby wrapped in her shawl, creeping in an exhausted state to the door of a monastery, frantically reaching for the bell handle. The snow was lying

thickly on the ground, and everything suggested a human tragedy. Seeing its effect on me, my father obtained leave to remove this engraving.

I resolved to make a determined effort to relieve him of this uncalled-for expense, occasioned by my illness. I insisted on getting up on the third day. But I was not prepared for the sickening weakness I felt when I tried to stand; still I persisted that I *could* travel, and, greatly against my father's wishes, we both took the train for Augsburg—fortunately not a long journey. At the station my father placed me against a column (there were no seats) whilst he hurriedly searched outside the station for some refreshment, of which I was greatly in need. On his return he saw me clinging for dear life to the column, to prevent myself from falling, so unutterably weak did I feel.

We first paid a surprise visit to my Uncle Peter, my father's eldest brother already referred to, who was a medical practitioner in a small village not very far from Munich. The brothers had not met for fourteen years, and had but seldom corresponded. In our



class of life people wrote few letters, and I may say that a letter from a relative was an event, to which the writing of an answer was an episode of serious import. On the other hand my mother, who, as a girl, had already taught in her father's village school, prided herself on both the diction and the handwriting of her letters. They were of the good old-fashioned type, with sentences nicely rounded, correct sentiments added to embellish the commoner topics, and written in German characters of copper-plate perfection. Well, this visit to my Uncle Peter afforded a rest that was as agreeable to my spirit as it was indispensable to my body, for I was barely convalescent; and there was, moreover, the ever present possibility of a relapse.

My uncle was a collector of curios—as far as his means permitted—and a lover of all things artistic. The principal room in his house contained Gothic cabinets of simple workmanship, chairs, tables, etc., gathered from peasants' houses as opportunity offered itself. A decorative touch was given by the ivy growing in pots and feeling its way around the walls. His profession was suggested by a

beautifully prepared child's skull, kept under a glass case, whereby hung a tale. Then there was a curious old clock on the wall, which showed on its disk the hours and the seconds, the day of the week, the date of the month, the year, the moon in all its courses, and the hours of sunrise through the year. It had that sweet, caressing, soft tick that makes a clock such a delightful companion. This clock—of which the works were of wood—was made by monks, and came into my uncle's possession in a curious way. At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries many monasteries were "dissolved" by the government in the south of Germany, and the monks were turned adrift to start a secular life once more. Some had possessions whilst in the monasteries, which they sold in order to obtain ready money. It was one of these monks that possessed the clock I have named, and a peasant living in my uncle's neighbourhood bought it from him. On my uncle's medical rounds he saw this curio at the peasant's house, and straightway—as a collector—coveted it.

Now a real collector will always, in some way or other, get the object he covets. He resorts to any means in order to attain his end. "Get it" is the phrase that he hears in his inner consciousness. Well, in this case the peasant was obdurate: he would not sell. But my uncle was determined that the peasant *should* part with it, and bided his time. He now found out that the peasant was an inveterate gambler, and he formed his plans for a final attack on this weak side—when the psychological moment should arrive. It soon came, and the *coup* was made in this wise: one day my uncle saw him in a "Wirtshaus," as usual staking high at cards and losing heavily. His three rows of "silver coin-buttons" on each side of his short jacket were being rapidly reduced in numbers. When he had lost all his money, and had staked, and lost, the last button, my uncle quietly approached him, and in true Mephistophelian manner whispered the temptation into his ear: "Give me the clock, and I will pay all your debts, as well as give you a surplus." The peasant, heated with the play, and wild for another chance of redeeming his losses, agreed;

the devil won, and the peasant gave up the clock !

In my uncle's home I saw the life and habits of this class of people in Bavaria. I was not a little surprised and shocked to find that my uncle took his meals without the family partaking of them with him. Wife and daughters only waited on him. Even my father and myself, who were his guests, never partook of food with the master of the house. His meal was not elaborate : it consisted of one course—a kind of soup, in which were bits of meat cut into little squares, some vegetables, and perhaps bread.

I have already stated that I enthusiastically followed my father in his renunciation of meat, but I never lost my longing for it. During the first part of my convalescence I had only fruit and farinaceous food, for which I had little appetite. Now, to sit by my uncle whilst he was having his "meat stew," giving forth, as it did, that deliciously appetizing odour of soup, flavoured by various herbs (only used in Germany), was too much for me. My craving for it overcame my principles, and forced me to whisper to my father a request

to ask Uncle Peter to give me some of it. This he did most joyfully ; and daily, after that, picked out those bits of meat from his soup and gave them to me. I counted the hours for that meal each day, and devoured the meat with an avidity that made me feel some shame—or call it shyness—in the presence of my father. Out of deference to our principles my uncle had never offered meat to us, but when my craving for it was hinted by my father, he was more than glad to satisfy it, as he did not think my diet proper for my condition.

My recovery was strikingly rapid. Whether it was owing to this new nitrogenous diet, or to my disease having spent itself, I cannot say ; but I was back to life, and with the returning energy I felt a longing for work, and a desire to settle in Munich without more delay, to begin my art-studies.

## CHAPTER IX

MUNICH, 1865

PERHAPS at no period of my life has my mind been subjected to so sudden, so severe a transition of impressions, as when, at the age of sixteen, my father took me away for the first time from Southampton—a provincial town in England, devoid of all art, present or traditional—to the Bavarian capital, Munich, with its untold art-treasures, and art-atmosphere everywhere. The change, however, was not only too sudden, but too violent to benefit me at that age : it was placing a replete fare before a starved mind, or one that had not yet acquired the capacity for assimilation. Had unforeseen circumstances not cut short our stay after six months, no doubt I should have grown and developed with the opportunities offered in such abundance.

I cannot at this distance of time offer any

explanation of my father's idea that I should study art in Germany. It is certain, however, that he had no chance of making himself acquainted with the status of English art at the time. I had repeated such of Ruskin's writings to him as I had heard from my fellow-student at the Southampton School of Art; but they were as incomprehensible to him as they were unclear to me. In that case it was but natural that he could not see their connection with my career. And so it came about that his original idea that I should study art in Germany was never revised or altered. As events have proved, it was more than fortunate that by an accident England, and not Germany, became my art-home.

It did not occur to my father to make early inquiries as to the divisions of the Academy-school's terms, and what with the delays of the journey we came to Munich just a week before the long vacation. In that time, however, I made the competitive drawing as a candidate for the Academy. For this drawing of an antique head I received unstinted praise from my master, Professor Echter, and was at

once accepted as a student of the Academy Schools.

This Professor was a pupil and follower of Kaulbach, who belonged to that ultra-academic school which held the opinion that painting was secondary to drawing, that the antique should supplant nature, and that realism of any kind should be once and for all banished from the Fine Arts.

King Ludwig the First of Bavaria had the laudable ambition to make Munich the first Art City in Germany. He gathered artists of talent around him and employed them generously. He insisted on Michael Angelo being taken as the model upon which all artists were to form their art. He thought it only needed a great pattern to enable his artists to rise to his patriotic ideas, and rival the Italian giant. But he only created an exotic art around him, which was neither epoch-making nor vital—therefore was effete.

When I entered my studentship at Munich these classicists, however, were not yet dethroned. They still felt secure, and looked upon a newly-risen band of young realists



much as the Academical school in England looked upon the Pre-Raphaelite movement : realism was not art, and nature was not art. But for all that these younger upstarts rankled in their minds, and jealously rose to ugly dimensions. When Piloty, who brought over the influence of the Belgian painter Gallait, exhibited his large picture of "Nero after the burning of Rome," Kaulbach was persuaded to go and see it. He only made the caustic remark that "the rubbish was well painted."

Piloty, after the death of Kaulbach, was acknowledged to be the head of German art, but his reign was of short duration. His realism did not go far enough to satisfy the trend of the times, which was merging into individualism—each artist for himself—with less and less respect for tradition. This movement—which would have suited my temperament better than the established formulae of study to which I was to be subjected—came into existence several years after I had left Munich. I certainly could not have endured a two years' course of the antique alone, and that was what my good

professor had marked out for me. It would have been cut short by rebellion on my part.

Well, the long vacation had to be filled in with some kind of work. Professor Echter allowed me to take home casts from his studio : hands, feet, faces, all from the antique, and he offered to criticize my drawings of them, for he was the kindest of men, and had taken an especial liking to me. I did these drawings in our lodgings dutifully, but not willingly. Hearing of a private evening life-class to which painters and sculptors resorted for the practice of drawing, and moreover where there was no master to influence one's method of work, my father thought, as it was not under the control of *my professor*, it might be a good opportunity to anticipate the school training by an early practice in drawing from the nude, so we both joined.

When I showed my life-studies to Echter, he shook his head sadly, and picking out one with specially black shadows (drawn as I had seen them) he said, "Too French." He went on to say, "When I was young, we aimed at beautiful drawing ; now it is only tone, tone,

tone !” That was forty-five years ago, and the cry is still heard.

It was a happy time my father and I had together. Freed from the continual “pin-pricks” that he had to endure in Southampton, back in his native country, surrounded by the people of his own blood and sociality, with my art-education started—he enjoyed a contentment that had been denied him since he emigrated to America. I too had changed ; the wild behaviour and disobedience of my boyhood were things of the past ; and my ungovernable temper was in abeyance. The letters my father wrote to my mother at the time were full of my good behaviour.

We lived in the most frugal manner, one room sufficing for kitchen, sitting-room, bedroom, and workshop for the carving of the Evangelists. These figures were prepared up to a certain point in the shop of the carpenter who was our landlord, and lived on the ground floor.

Twice during our stay we went to the theatre, and of course occupied the cheapest places. The first piece we witnessed was a spoken drama, with incidental music by

Karl Maria von Weber, called *Preciosa*. How magical it all seemed to me ! It was the first stage-play I had ever seen. The second piece was Weber's masterpiece, *Der Freischütz*. Neither of the plays have I seen again, and the magic of that first impression on my mind has remained undisturbed through all these years.

An event now happened that altered the direction of my whole artistic career, and settled once and for all the country to which, as an artist, I was finally to belong. Just before the Academy was to open, my father endeavoured to get his passport renewed, as in those days a passport was only granted to a naturalized British subject for six months. He did not know, or it had not been clearly told him, that such a passport could only be renewed *in person* in England. No representative of the British Government in Munich had power to renew it ; therefore if he stayed away for over six months from England, he forfeited his British citizenship. If, on the other hand, he once more became a German citizen, I, as his son, should have had to serve my term in the army. This latter alternative

was altogether abhorrent to him, and he decided at very short notice to break my course of studies in Munich, and return to England. So we left the city of art—we and the unfinished Evangelists—in the early autumn of that year, 1865, and once more settled in Southampton.

## CHAPTER X

### SOUTHAMPTON AGAIN—LONDON

THE question that now lay uppermost in our minds was, where my art education should be resumed. Paris did not appeal to my father as feasible. Whilst in Munich we had heard something of the life led by art students in that city, which was not very edifying or reassuring. I do not know who suggested South Kensington to my father, nor how it was that the Royal Academy Schools were not mentioned, more especially as the latter had free tuition. But whatever the explanation may have been, the South Kensington Schools were chosen, and I was to join them the following year, 1866, for the summer term of six months.

There was now the winter to be got through ; some kind of work had to be done. My father rented a disused school-room in

which to finish the Evangelists. In this improvised studio, and amidst the evangelical chips, I worked at whatever came to hand—without any definite aims or plans. I carved, modelled, cast leaves from nature (after a manner we had learnt in Munich), sketched a little out of doors—and, in fact, “pottered” in art work. It was not satisfying, however, and left my mind hazy and dull. Then Southampton, after Munich, seemed unutterably arid and stupid. I missed the galleries of pictures by the greatest past masters; I longed for the whole art atmosphere that surrounded us in the Bavarian capital. My former companions had all entered bread-earning occupations and were no longer available in the day-time; there was, in fact, a void that was depressing and irritating.

Although my health was well established, there was a lull in my day-dreaming, which deprived me of that precious “inner-world” that had hitherto gilded my daily life. My ambition was dulled, and I built up no great future for myself, as I had been wont to do. I cared not even for reading, and this was the most deplorable part of that deplorable

condition. That would have been the time to read the writings of John Ruskin ; I should at least have learnt English, if I had failed to follow his dogmas ; I should have widened the range of my mental vision, and fed the enfeebled flame of my imagination.

With the spring, however, the settling of certain practical questions caused some excitement, and somewhat dispelled the gloom that hung over my mind. My lodging in London was a grave matter. The parents were appalled at the idea of my living alone amidst strangers, in a city of such magnitude ; yet there is no city in the world so secure, so well-regulated, where all parts of its great area are so easy of access—as London. True, a stranger can feel more lonely in a crowded street of London than perhaps in any other capital. Men and women pass you with an indifference that affects the stranger unpleasantly. A lady who has dropped her glove will look at you with suspicion when you offer it to her, and will probably walk on with an air of indignation. A foot-passenger will give you but scant attention if you happen to have lost your way and ask



for directions. But nowhere in the world is the policeman so friendly, so helpful, so patient and kind as in England, and more especially in London. Other countries have sent their police to study the regulation of street traffic in London; they may imitate the methods, but they cannot produce the constable.

Well, undefined anxiety, and fear of all kinds, troubled my parents at the thought of my living alone in London. They finally decided that safety was only possible by my living with a family, and by a fortunate coincidence a pupil of my mother's had parents living in Wandsworth Road—the father a retired carpenter—who were willing to give me a home at a reasonable price. So that was arranged; but it entailed a twelve-mile walk on five days of the week, as Wandsworth Road was three miles from South Kensington, and the journey had to be made four times a day.

When my father, who took me to London, saw how I was housed, he was completely at rest. My host then showed us the way to South Kensington, the journey I was to

take four times a day. The first turning out of Wandsworth Road brought us abruptly into a long, slightly curved road, with orchards and fields on either side, and an entire absence of gas lamps for night-lighting. The fields mentioned reached as far as the arches of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway. Passing under these and some second arches, of another line, we were brought into a road that followed the outside of Battersea Park. Here, too, there was but imperfect provision for light after dark. At the end of this road we passed over the Suspension Bridge ; then, through various slums—now transformed into elegant streets with fashionable flats—and we arrived in Fulham Road, from which the schools were not far distant. Having guided us so far, Mr. Hall left us, and my father and I walked on to Hyde Park, in a somewhat ominous silence. My father had chosen the spot near the statue of Achilles for our parting, and it was in front of this statue that I parted from him for the first time in my life.

How can I describe my sensations as I watched the retreating steps of my father—

alone, yet my own master, free to act for myself, needing no longer to ask permission to do this or that? I can only liken them to that state of mind when, in our dreams, we seem to rise from the ground and float in the air! But there was a counter-emotion that shook me to the soul. I had not moved from the spot, and when my father at last disappeared from view, my hitherto sternly-suppressed tears burst from my eyes, and I felt I wanted to shriek! A love for my father welled up in my heart that had never before been so intense or so overwhelming. A sudden rift in my clouded mind seemed suddenly to reveal the full meaning of all he had done for me in the past. There are moments in life that turn lads instantly into men, and this is what I experienced then.

## CHAPTER XI

### SCIENCE AND ART SCHOOLS, SOUTH KENSINGTON

I RETRACED my steps to my new home, and arrived just in time for the family dinner—one o'clock. I was much struck with the nicely-laid table and spotless white cloth. I noticed also the horn-handled knives and three-pronged forks; but the cruet-stand and its use were unknown to me. When and with what were the various contents of the bottles to be used? I was now to make the acquaintance of what is called "plain English cooking." Already on my entrance into the house my nostrils caught the poignant odour of roast meat; but I could not identify the beast. The reader must know that I had eaten no animal food since my Uncle Peter gave me the little bits of meat from his daily stew. Now, Mr. Hall, good soul, belonged to that class of people who think you do not like

what is offered you unless you take it in great quantities ; but this presented no difficulties to me in those fortunate days when I had teeth and a digestion. Now I have neither ; and the very smell of a great leg of mutton deprives me of all appetite. So will a large quantity of food on my plate ; I have in fact arrived at a period of life when “ I eat with my eyes.”

Well, this midday dinner seemed hardly over before afternoon tea was served. There was still another meal later on, called supper—so my host informed me. But on that first day I thought it wiser to plead weariness and retire to bed early, for I felt I had eaten enough for a week.

The next morning I started early for the schools, to pay my fees, and sign my name in the books. I took with me several of my Munich life-studies, thinking that if they were seen by the master, I would naturally be allowed to enter the life-class at once. But this anticipation was not to be realized. The under master, who interviewed me, sneeringly asked which of the many lines I intended should represent the correct contour.

I began arguing about arbitrary outlines, which did not improve matters, and he cut the conversation short by ordering me to start in the antique room without more ado.

I began the figure of the Discobolus, burning all the while with indignation, and smarting under what I considered the injustice that had been done me. I felt no more reconciled to the task the next day ; and indeed, in a couple of hours, I had reached the limit of my patience. Then I took a desperate resolve : I marched boldly into the life-class, carrying with me drawing-board, chalks, stumps, etc. None of the students working there suspected that I joined them without permission, therefore no questions were asked. Now, my intention was to do as much as possible to my drawing from the model before the master came round, and then boldly to "face the music." Fortunately, Mr. Birchett, the head master, was particularly late that day, and I was able to get the whole figure drawn in and some parts finished. I did not feel nervous when he came along, as I was strung up for a vigorous defence. He looked at the drawing, and noticing that I was a

new man, asked me if I had permission to draw in the life-class? I answered, "No, sir," but added that I had already drawn from the life in Munich, and fully expected when I came to this school to be put in the life-room direct. Then Mr. Birchett told me it was the rule of the school to pass from the "antique" to the "life." My reply to this was: "I have not broken that rule, sir; I *have* passed from the antique to the life; I worked in the antique room all day yesterday." It was fortunate for me that the master had a sense of humour, for the impudence of my answer seemed rather to tickle than annoy him. He smiled, and said, "Well, your drawing is very good, and quite up to the standard required for admittance to this class. You can stay."

When he left the room the students were all convulsed and took an immediate interest in me, considering me quite an eccentric. At that time, 1866-7, there were some very good draughtsmen in the life-class, of whom four have since become Royal Academicians, and three, Members of the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours.

Birchett, the head master, was a worthy man ; he was kind, considerate, and conscientious, according to his lights, in dealing with the students' art-work. I cannot remember, however, having gained anything by his criticism. The under master in the "life," of whom we saw more, was a landscape-painter of second rank. His duty was to pose the model (we had only the male figure), and, knowing his excitability and nervousness, we students used to delight in getting a rise out of him by making irritating little remarks as he "pulled" the model about in the vain endeavour to get an interesting pose.

Before the sending-in day of the Academy he used to invite us all to see his contributions. We were sorely tried on these occasions. The head master also had a private view of his work, to which we were asked. But our respect for Birchett prevented us from uttering rude or frivolous remarks ; we tried to admire what we knew to be second-rate historical painting.

I had two summer terms at these schools. I certainly got some practice in drawing and painting from the nude figure ; but it was all



so aimless, so undirected. The system of teaching, whatever it may have been, did not encourage the student to "dig" for his own identity. Nor can I remember whether I was influenced by the work around me. I attended anatomical lectures, which were too dry to interest me. In the library I copied Gustave Doré's illustrations to Dante's *Inferno*. Ye gods ! Gustave Doré ! But Walker soon became the talk, and I no longer looked at Doré.

There was a lively discussion as to the merits of Walker's first essay in oils, "The Bathers." To me it seemed a new direction, a new light, that had appeared on the horizon. To some, Walker was only an imitator of William Hunt, and not so good. Others declared he could not paint ; that he was only treating his pictures as wood-drawings in colour, and so on. I was, however, "bitten," and badly too, as will be seen in subsequent chapters.

The teaching at the Kensington Schools led me nowhere in my art. There is something wrong in a system for the training of art-students that does not awaken the power

of "seeing" the artistic aspect of nature, or help the student to grasp the meaning of "quality" in painting. Not a criticism was given me that would have led me to either. I did endless studies, all of uniform merit, or de-merit, and all were quickly and easily done. Judging them now—impersonally—and with the experience of years in teaching, I can clearly see how a *word*—the right one at the proper moment—would have put my young mind on the right track; I should have recognized the identity upon which my future depended.

With the absence of direction I drifted on smoothly, and never (worse luck) had any bad hours. I attended regularly, was in good health, and my ambition was in abeyance. The pocket-money my parents allowed me enabled me to indulge in the one pleasure I desired—that of attending the Saturday concerts at the Crystal Palace, under Manns. An exhibitor in the Palace picture-gallery received a free pass, and as the standard was rather low, the drawing I sent in order to get this free entrance was accepted. Including the railway journey, refreshments and pro-

gramme, my pocket money of *two shillings and sixpence* was practically absorbed for the week. I can truthfully say that I never exceeded that sum from first to last whilst I studied at Kensington; I knew only too well how hard it was for the parents to spare the money for my living in London.

After the second term of these schools and my return to Southampton, I wanted to show my comrades in Southampton how to paint from the nude. My skill was not up to a high level, but I did not think so at the time, and the estimation in which I was held by those few enthusiasts—men who were longing to be painters, but were tied to some business—did not lessen my self-esteem. But from boyhood I had the strongest desire to teach, and seldom missed an opportunity to show others what I knew, or only half-knew. So it was soon settled that five of us should start an evening life-class. I was to give all the hints I could, and to criticize the studies of the members. My work, done under these conditions, was infinitely better than that which I did at Kensington. The humdrum curriculum of the school gave me no incentive

to rouse myself: in fact, I became a part of the *system*. In this little class I was at once put on my mettle, and for the obvious reason that I did not dare to repeat the faults in my own work that I had pointed out in the other studies. Moreover, my comrades believed in me, and that put me on my honour.

We soon developed a consciousness that we were pioneers in that town, and that it behoved us,—nay, it was a duty—to show the townspeople that there was a nucleus of young artists amongst them of which they were unaware. We therefore inaugurated the first art exhibition ever held in Southampton. A frame-maker and dealer in works of art, by name Wiseman, had a small gallery over his shop in the High Street, which we promptly engaged, and mustered together sixty-five works for our first show: drawings, sketches, landscapes, subject-pictures, portraits, and even some of our studies from the nude. Our expenses were paid by the sale of the catalogue, for which we charged sixpence. I have the catalogue before me now, with its grandiloquent preface, written by one of the group—the only one who had some claims to

scholarship. He also gave us the motto :  
 "labor ipse voluptas." A notice, printed  
 under the word "catalogue," runs : "All  
 finished, framed paintings and drawings are  
 for sale. For price inquire of the Secretary,  
 Mr. Herkomer, *who attends in the Gallery*"  
 (the italics are mine). I have also before me  
 Wiseman's receipt for our expenses :—

Room expenses . . . .	£2	2	0
(Stevens) Picture, commission	0	2	0
Two Herkomer pictures „	0	9	0
	<hr/>		
	£2	13	0
	<hr/>		

(Signed over stamp)

Received, 15th July 1868.

SAMUEL J. WISEMAN.

As will be seen, only three drawings were  
 sold, and two were mine. A friend bought  
 one of the latter, and a local artist—Mr.  
 C. F. Williams, a stranger to me—purchased  
 the other. Lest my reader should think that  
 I took undue advantage of my position as  
 "Gallery Attendant," I wish to mention  
 that the last-named water-colour drawing  
 was sold during my temporary absence from  
 the exhibition.

After Mr. Williams' death, Wiseman wrote in an appreciative article, published in a local paper: "His kindness and consideration for those seeking art-knowledge were great, and I and many others have to thank him for help and advice in early days. I have often made use of his matured experience in selecting drawings and paintings. He never withheld praise from a fellow artist's work, but gave it unstintingly if due. His intimate knowledge of David Cox's work (who was his master) enabled me to verify, or otherwise, work attributed to that master." . . .

The article continues: "Many years ago I cleared my gallery in order to exhibit the work of a small society of art-students. This was a great event at the time. The Press were expected early, but Mr. Williams was averse to a crush, and stole a march on all by coming in at nine o'clock, before 'the executive' arrived, and he and I had a private view all to ourselves. He carefully inspected each picture, sometimes exclaiming, 'Good!' 'Capital!' or 'Poor fellow!' Coming to a little water-colour of Southampton Common, he exclaimed, 'This fellow has the right stuff

in him and will make a name. Give me a bit of paper.' He marked it sold. The young artist was Hubert Herkomer, and the price of the drawing was two guineas."

Had it been my good fortune to have come under the influence of Mr. Williams I should have saved the years that I lost when I was misguided by the School of Art master. Williams' work was that of a real artist: it presented nature in its most delicate aspect; it lingered lovingly over detail, and was far removed from ordinary conventionality.

A little incident comes to my mind which proves how valuable would have been his guidance. One day—some years before that exhibition—I saw him making pencil memoranda on the Western Shore. The sun had just dropped below the horizon opposite, the sky all aglow in deep orange! I watched for a time at a respectful distance, thinking the while how I might address him and ask a question. I approached nearer, then suddenly blurted out: "May I ask you, sir, how to paint such a sky?" Most kindly did he turn to me with the words: "Look, my boy, look, and always look;

that is the only way to find out how to paint nature."

I have stated that my criticisms in the life-class had a beneficial effect on me. But the exhibition called forth a trait that had been somewhat in abeyance—ambition. The excitement following on the publicity of work caused a desire in me to do something of real importance. But I had not yet learnt the art of *seeing subjects*. Although Southampton was replete with subjects for the figure-painter, it did not suggest Walker, and was therefore out of my line of vision. Then I bethought me of trying some other locality in the hope of finding subjects. But where? Accident soon decided this question, as will be related in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER XII

### MY FIRST SKETCHING CAMPAIGN (1868)

THERE is a village on the opposite shore of Southampton Water, called Hythe. Here a gentleman lived who took in pupils. He had at this time only one boy as boarder, whom he educated with his daughter. I answered his advertisement for a music-master who could also teach drawing, and was engaged at a very small salary to give two lessons a week to this boy and girl. If I remember rightly, this gentleman was a clergyman. He was fond of gardening and fruit-growing, and constantly exhibited the produce of his garden. I remember this because of a curious incident in which neither he nor I managed to shine. On the table were placed his beautiful fruits, and he was just writing out labels for exhibition when he suddenly seemed puzzled. "Dear me," he said, "dear me, dear me";

and addressing me, he asked me whether "raspberry" was spelt with a p. To my shame, I did not know either, but I made a random shot for the p, and on consulting a dictionary proved I had hit the mark. This incident has engraved indelibly on my memory the correct way of spelling "raspberry." In recent times the connection of an incident or an object *with a word* has been made the basis of a system of memory training. Well, neither the boy nor the girl had touched music or drawing, therefore I had nothing to unteach. Hence, although not especially bright, they progressed quickly, and I soon got them to play the simple Clementi Sonatas, avoiding theory as much as possible until they could perform something with tune in it. In drawing, I avoided the methods of the orthodox drawing-master, *i.e.* Harding's lithographs of trees, etc., and made them work either direct from nature or from casts of leaves which I had myself made. I made them, I remember, keep to a large thistle leaf for a fortnight or more, and do the shading with pen and ink; but they caught my enthusiasm, which, even in those days,

and under such circumstances, was strongly marked.

After these lessons I generally explored the neighbourhood to pass the time until the boat took me back to Southampton. On one of these wanderings I came across an old windmill—a picturesque, lonely-looking, weird thing, as most windmills look when out of repair and seen against the sky. In this case the loneliness seemed to be emphasized by an adjoining cottage, which was in a dilapidated state, and had been uninhabited for a long time ; it might once have been the cottage of an affluent miller, but had now become uninhabitable. As I approached the mill the old miller was smoking his pipe at the door. He had a jovial face, and greeted me with a friendly smile. I could not help contrasting this specimen of contented humanity with the sullen aspect of the great wings that swung round silently, emblems of unwilling obedience. I got into a pleasant conversation with the befloured miller, and gradually led up to what I was contemplating, viz. a stay there for sketching purposes, at the smallest possible cost. He at once offered me his bed in the

mill, stating that he could always make himself comfortable on a sack. I looked at his bed, on the third story of that lighthouse-shaped edifice. It was a sort of box without a lid, placed on the floor. There was some rough sacking material that contained straw in it, showing a perfect mould of the miller's figure, for it was never shaken; there was also a blanket for covering, and an additional patchwork quilt, the work of wife or daughter long since dead. Now this bed and this quilt had never been changed or washed or cleaned for years! Add to this that he always slept in his "floury" clothes, and it can be imagined that there was a quality about the bed-clothes not unworthy of the surface and colour of an Old Master, only flour and dirt of years' accumulation gives a "something" undefinable, that is more weird than the mere brown of an Old Master. It gave a texture to the fabric that I defy any looms to imitate. I was not so squeamish in those days as I am now, but that bed was too much for me, for, in addition to the quality, there was a "life" about it, to which my body would have been an especial attraction. So I made some excuses about

not wishing to deprive him of his bed, and merely thanked him. I then examined the dilapidated cottage adjoining and found one room upstairs which still had a door that would shut, and a window with all the panes intact. From outside I could also see that the roof was still good over this room, so I decided to use it for my sleeping apartment, as I got it rent free. Then came the question of my meals. The miller pointed out another solitary cottage at the bottom of the hill, where he had his food, and spent the evenings. I only now needed to interview the woman of this cottage, who, the miller assured me, was a very "obliging creature." We found the door of the cottage locked; but after waiting a little, the miller pointed to the woman, who was coming up the hill. But what I saw was distinctly alarming: a tall, gaunt, fierce-looking woman, with a huge stick in her hand, with which she was driving a drunken man in front of her. This, I learnt, was her husband, a little man, over whom she towered a good head and shoulders. When she reached us the miller introduced me, and explained what I wanted. "Wait a bit," she said, and,

turning to the cottage, she unlocked the door, drove her reeling husband in with a "whack" across his back, and again turned the key in the door. Then she came back to us, and faced me with a scrutinizing concentrated stare. Having made up her mind as to my character, she said: "All right, I'll do for the little gentleman." Do FOR ME, I thought: yes, it looked like it. But I found this mannish woman kindness itself; she seemed to take me under her special protection, which was proved one day. I happened to be painting in the garden when some passing, half-drunken louts jeered at me and tried to hinder me from working. Then they hustled me, when I naturally hit out and gradually backed towards the cottage—they were four to one, it must be remembered. The old lady heard the commotion, and burst from the cottage with her formidable stick, scattering the yokels right and left; indeed, some began to run the moment they saw her, as she was well known to take the law into her own hands. "I'll teach you to interfere with my little gentleman," she shrieked after them.

My engagement as teacher of music and

drawing having terminated, I received my salary, which, though small, ought to last me, I thought, for some time in the life I proposed to live, and for which I had made arrangements.

My parents were easily persuaded to let me try this sketching experiment, especially as it was near home. In the furnishing of the bedroom I carried simplicity to the verge of discomfort : a bundle of straw on the floor, a blanket or two, and a pillow completed the bed. As my ablutions were carried out at the spring down in the hollow below the mill, a wash-hand-stand was quite superfluous. And as for a candlestick, a bottle was not only more in keeping with the general "design" of the room than a candlestick of china or metal, but was calculated to offer a disappointment to any thieves who might venture to invade my "sleeping apartment" in search of spoil.

Now the spring I have mentioned played an important part in my career. One morning, whilst I was at my toilet, a little girl, with hood and pinafore (just such a girl as Birket Foster made so popular, and Frederick Walker

and George Mason made so picturesque), came to fill her pitcher from the clear spring. She took no notice of me (although she might have looked at me without a shock), but stood, with one hand pressing back a branch of an alder tree that almost hid the trickling water, watching the filling of the vessel, little dreaming of the artistic impression she was making on me. Here was a subject to draw, if not to paint. I arranged with her to sit to me (not without some difficulty), and I made my first drawing on wood that had any promise in it. I ventured to send it to Dalziel Brothers, the engravers. A few days after I received a most kind and encouraging letter from them, with a cheque for four guineas. Here was a beginning, truly a "spring" of future possibilities, that I found in that hollow.

The drawing of the little girl at the spring was engraved by the Dalziels, and published in *Good Words*, with a story written *to it*, called "Lonely Jane." One of the brothers, Mr. Edward Dalziel, who became my special friend, was instrumental in the selling of my first important water-colour drawing in the Dudley Gallery in 1870—of which more anon; and



the year afterwards he bought my drawing painted at Tréport, "War News."

But I must go back to my first evening in the one cottage, and my first night in the other. Both the miller and I had had our suppers. I cannot recollect of what the supper consisted, but I *do* remember of what my daily dinner consisted—potatoes, boiled in their jackets, and eaten with butter and milk. I see those potatoes now, piled up on the plate in a pyramidal form; and I can distinctly recall the *after-effects* of that one course!

Well, whatever the supper was, we had had it, and had settled down for the evening—the miller in his accustomed place, the humbled husband in the chimney-corner, and the housewife busying herself in removing our "feast." Then a few privileged neighbours dropped in and were allowed to smoke their pipes, whilst the miller brought out his fiddle and I my zither—which latter caused quite a commotion. The miller had played his half-dozen tunes for years from the same corner, on the same strings (which never seemed to break), and to the same audience. He had a reputation, had this miller, and with his instrument was a personage

of importance. I could readily discern that a rival musician, likely to put him in the shade, was not at all to his taste. To prevent any possible jealousy I made him open the concert, meanwhile leaving my zither on the table for the company to gaze at. Then I requested him to repeat the tunes, to which I improvised accompaniments. This made him feel greater than ever. When, however, I played some of those sweet simple German "Volkslieder," to which the peculiar tone of the zither gave a certain pathos that never failed to touch the heart, he frankly acknowledged that he had to take a back seat. Poor old fellow, he often spoke about getting a "gamut," as he called it, to learn the notes in music. So I thought I would try and teach him without the "gamut." But it was hopeless; his brain was too dense to admit of such a mathematical problem as musical notation, however simply put.

These musical evenings became very popular, so much so that the strong woman had to resort to her big stick more than once in order to keep the place clear of undesirables, who, however, when driven out of the room,

lingered outside, and listened at the window. About ten o'clock the company broke up, and the miller and I made our way in a pitch-dark night to our respective quarters. On that first night it was fortunate that I had a guide whose eyes could penetrate the darkness like those of a cat. But I had to face another darkness, and this time alone—a darkness that seemed darker than even the dark night outside—the inside of that dilapidated cottage where I was to sleep. For the life of me I could not recollect where that blessed staircase was situated in relation to the front door, and I had no matches, for, stupidly enough, I had left my one box in the bedroom by the side of the “bottled” candle, since, as a non-smoker, I never carried matches about with me. After much groping and knocking against various corners, I finally found my way to the bedroom. Needless to say, after this experience I always kept my matchbox in my pocket, and a candle ready for lighting just inside the front entrance, for the door had long vanished. On that night I only partially undressed, as the situation was a bit eerie to my imaginative mind. There were such a lot of queer sounds, all new to

me. For instance, there were creaking sounds, that I could only ascribe to the stairs in their resentment at the insult of having been used by human feet after all those years of peaceful rest : sounds something like the cracking of our bones when we stretch too suddenly or too violently. Then the light in the room—which, be it told, I was not in a hurry to put out—attracted the bats outside, who playfully tapped the window with their wings at disturbing intervals. Then came the screech of an owl to make night hideous. But what seemed more weird to my excited brain than all these sounds was the moan of the wind through the sails of the mill. It had by no means the poetic effect of an Aeolian lyre, but was more like the voices that we might imagine coming from troubled spirits. But just as Luther, when he was writing, took no more notice of the noises the Devil was making, knowing them to emanate *from* the Devil, so did I take no further notice, after that first night, of the dreadful sounds, knowing their origin.

My nights, however, were not long, as I had to rise at three o'clock to get at my landscape just before the sun appeared over the

horizon. I selected this scene because I was fascinated by the jewel-like effect of the dew on the cobwebs that formed festoons from bracken to gorse—an effect impossible to render in paint, even by the greatest of masters. How curious it is that nearly all young artists select for a first essay some subject or theme far beyond their powers—such indeed as they would not dare to tackle in later years !

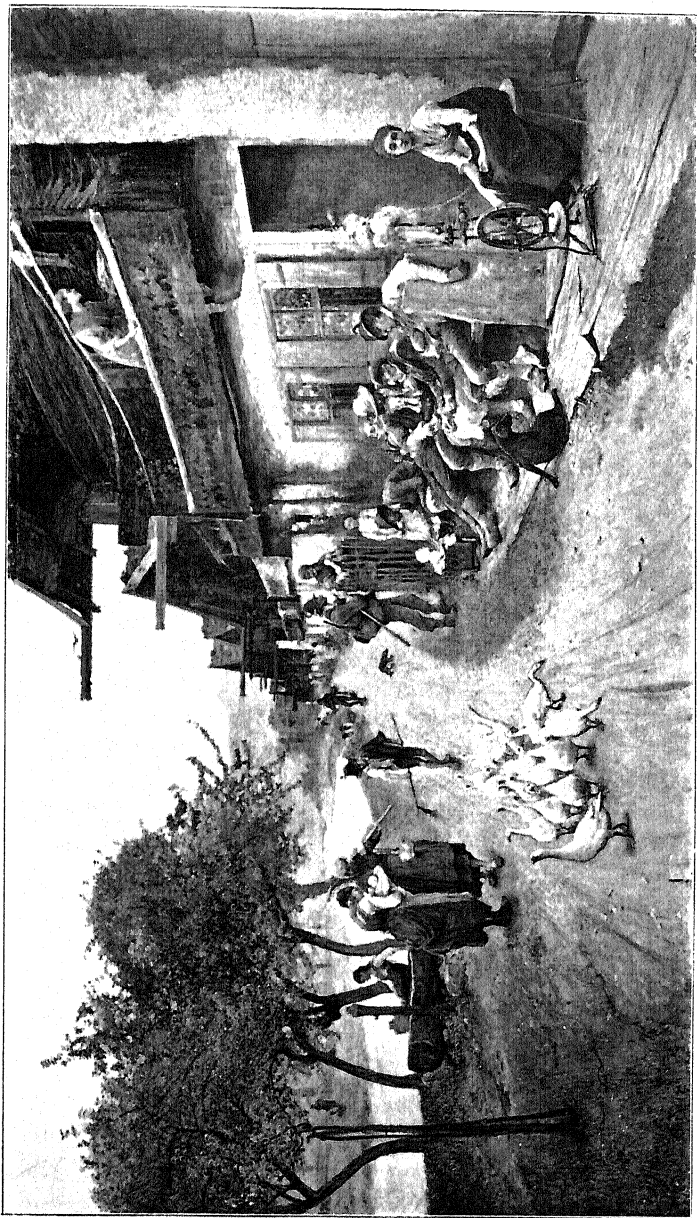
I am unable to explain why at that time I threw over the stronger medium of oils and worked steadily in water-colours. It is the more inexplicable, as all the life studies I painted at the South Kensington Schools had been in oil-colours. But perhaps my abject worship of Walker's work naturally led me to imitate the progressive stages through which he passed—from wood-draughtsman to water-colourist, and from water-colourist to the painter in oil-colours. I had experimented a little in drawing on wood during my last course at Kensington. How well I remember taking my first attempt to Fildes (now Sir Luke Fildes) in the Galleries of the South Kensington Museum, where he was at work copying on to the wood block Armitage's

picture of "Judas" for the *Illustrated London News*; in those days photography had not yet been employed for the transfer of drawings or pictures to wood for the engravers. Fildes was my senior by four years. He was already, at the time I mention, a well-known illustrator, working along with Millais, Walker, Pinwell, Small, Houghton and Sandys. This, I should mention, was before the advent of *The Graphic*, which brought many young artists to the fore.

Without in any way resenting the interruption in his work, Fildes looked at my block-drawing, whilst I looked at his face. I could plainly discern by his expression the difficulty he had to be both kind and critical, for it was a poor performance I brought to show him. But his kindness far outweighed his critical remarks, and this was all the more to his credit—even as a friend—because the subject, without even considering its artistic treatment, was *banal* in the extreme. I ask the reader to judge for himself: a little girl, with stick in hand, the end of which was hidden under her apron, stood by a table in the garden, upon which was placed a big *pie* to cool. Her duty

**“AFTER THE TOIL OF THE DAY.”**

**(My first Oil Picture, painted at Garmisch, 1872.)**





was supposed to be the guarding of that pie from probable attacks of a cat that was seen crouching on a branch of a fruit-tree near the table. But the worst has yet to be told (as a matter of morality) : this subject was a direct "crib" from a German "Bilderbogen." I had no ideas, no notion how to search for subjects in nature, and there was nobody to guide me in the matter.

Imitators are known to exaggerate defects of the master with whom they are infatuated. My admiration for Walker caused me to fail in the same way. I certainly had no full understanding of his work or his aims. But never was enthusiastic admiration of a certain painter the cause of more "narrowing" in judgment, more shutting out of educational influences, more insistence on just that one particular phase of art, than in my case at that period—aye, and for some considerable time to come. It produced a blindness that seems to me now appalling; and had my natural bent not been so strong as to be finally irrepressible, I might never have been able to free myself from the thralldom of Walker. It is difficult to account for such

conditions in a young brain. My brain was *then* precisely what it is *now* : no new faculty has been—nor could have been—added to my innate mental composition. It was all there as now, the “indestructible iron framework we call our nature.” I was told that the Japanese Government once sent a Commission to examine the art of Japan and the art of Europe. After a long and exhaustive inspection in the different countries, the Commission reported that art in Japan was asleep, and that art in Europe was dead. Well, half my faculties were asleep, and the other half over-active.

Although it has been the bane and torture of my artistic life to see too many subjects to paint, yet at that early period I could see nothing. There, at Hythe, I entirely missed the many subjects that were around me—the picturesque villagers, the life in cottage and field. For instance, I never thought of the miller with his fiddle as a subject to draw, probably because Walker had not done a miller with a fiddle. Yet this old miller was a delightful subject for artistic treatment ; nor did that admirable scene in the cottage

on the musical evenings appeal to me—a scene so full of variety of character, a veritable story of lives, from the gaunt housewife to the meek husband, and the little company of farm labourers who were privileged to smoke their pipes in that little cottage room and listen to the miller's old-fashioned jigs. No, it was always a girl, and again a girl, that was the idea for a subject. Well, I *did* do a girl, standing in a cabbage garden with a knife in her hand. Of this little water-colour drawing, when it was exhibited in the Dudley Gallery (1869), a critic said: "It represents an ugly girl, standing in a garden of bad cabbages, with an impossible background." This drawing was bought by a friend of mine in Southampton for £2:10s., including the frame. Some years after he sent it to Christie's, where it fetched £25, to his and my surprise.

The landscape, over which I took such infinite trouble, and for which I tortured myself by early rising (never natural to me), is still in my possession. It is all faded and changed in colour, and no wonder, for I used

emerald green and vermillion with Chinese white. It is a conscientious, painstaking, inartistic effort, without a vestige of the picture-making element. Of all my artistic faculties at that time, my sense of colour was more than ordinarily asleep. I don't know whether the early rising was the cause of this, but the fact remains that the little landscapes I did on the block in black-and-white were infinitely better and more artistic than my work in colour, for, strangely enough, these landscapes, all drawn in pure line, showed a true feeling for relative values and tone, and distinctly suggested colour.

I stayed in Hythe about seven weeks, and by that time I was anxious to get to my home, not only as my monotonous diet began to pall, but the romance of my simple life had lost much of its charm. It was not a big artistic spoil I was able to bring home, but as far as it went, it was earnest and honest. My artistic development, however, was in a critical state, and at no period in my life was a friendly adviser more needed to enable me to *understand myself*. In Southampton I did not seem to look for figure-subjects, but was

continually impelled to attempt landscape. An incident now happened that rudely tore me from my love of landscape, and suddenly "pitchforked" me into the position of a cartoonist for a comic paper. The friend who bought my "Ugly Girl in the Garden of Bad Cabbages" was an author, in addition to being a coach-builder. He was acquainted with Mr. Hain Friswell, who was about to start a new comic paper, to be called *The Censor*. This friend, Eustace Hinton Jones, recommended me for the drawing of the cartoons, and this over the head of an already well-known cartoonist and imitator of Tenniel, Mr. Proctor, who was seeking the position on *The Censor*. It was a great windfall to me in the circumstances, as it meant regular employment at £2 per week for one drawing that had to be done in two days, thus leaving the rest of the week free for my more artistic work. The first subject given me was, "Folly, instructed by Death, feeds War"—a girl, wearing a fool's cap, directing Death (a skeleton) to load a cannon. Then I had to do "Bradlaugh besmearing Truth"; and again, "Nemesis"—a figure in the sky,

with a sword, driving out Queen Isabella from Spain. A second subject had to be drawn of this unhappy Isabella, which was of a much more vulgar type : the Pope, his mitre cocked on one side of his head, and somewhat battered in, in the character of a pawnbroker, sitting on the door-step of his shop, while Queen Isabella, in the shape of a ragged woman, with stockings down at heel, throws the great order she had received from Rome—the Golden Rose—at the feet of the pawnbroker, uttering the words : “ Now then, Governor ! You got me into this row : how much for the *blessed lot* ? ”

I may mention that some twelve years ago I was invited to dine with the Prince Regent of Bavaria (at the unearthly hour of four o'clock), where this very ex-Queen Isabella was the chief guest. She was then anything but a prepossessing personage, but she was very friendly to me, smiled at me, and tried to say some pleasant things to me in French. As I could not speak French, and she neither German nor English, we were mutually unintelligible. I merely made my bow, returned the smiles, and sat down at table,

where I was placed opposite to her. She still smiled at me, lifted her glass more than once to me, each time with a smile, which I returned each time with a bow and *my* very finest smile. It is not to be wondered at that I had my particular thoughts on that occasion, thoughts that took me back to the time when I was the unknown artist who was ordered to put this good old lady in such an unflattering light.

After I had done some half-dozen *Censor* cartoons, Mr. Friswell complained that my figures were too "German"! The criticism was a true one, for it put its finger upon the cause, unknowingly—my father had been my only model for the male figures.

Most people who have attained success in any walk of life are inclined to look back on certain events that have been turning-points in their careers. And it is a matter of wonder why just *those* certain events, rather than others, should have been selected by fate to become turning-points. Supposing my position as cartoonist for a comic paper had continued—continued until I had got thoroughly used to the work, or to like it,

and found my chief interest in merely the humorous side of life—might not my mind have been diverted from its real bent, which, as my whole work can testify, has been towards the pathetic side of life, towards a sympathy for the old, and for suffering mankind? The question cannot be answered definitely, because there was no chance of its being proved one way or another: it must remain as a surmise. But I firmly believe that the death of *The Censor* removed an enemy from my life.

I may here incidentally mention, although I am anticipating, that I had one more escape in my career, when dire necessity drove me to try my zither as an asset, for I had been on the point of being engaged by some Christy Minstrels, whose manager was very pleased with my performance on that instrument. I had carefully calculated the advantages that such an engagement would be to me in my impecunious position, before I applied for it. And they seemed to me principally—the regular weekly pay for only evening work, leaving the day clear for my art; and the security against recognition by the assumed



name and the blackened face. Fortunately for me there was some hitch in the preliminaries of the engagement, and I never appeared on that stage. With my musical and dramatic interests, heaven only knows into what a life or career I might have drifted ?

The question was now, what next ? The Dalziels had kindly taken a few landscape drawings on the block, but it was all so uncertain that I felt more and more the necessity of establishing myself in London, so as to be nearer to the source of employment. I had rightly judged that an engraver, who had to employ artists, would give the first chance to a man who called upon him rather than to a man who lived some eighty odd miles away from London. But this removal to London meant a radical change in my life, which my parents rather dreaded for me at my age. There were many family consultations, many arguments for and against ; tears from the anxious, loving mother ; earnest thought on the part of the father ; and it was some time before my parents gave their consent for me to settle in London. I pressed the necessity of the case with all the impetuosity

of my nature. Southampton began to choke me, for I was handicapped on all sides, which my natural ambition resented. It was finally decided that I should make the change, and I left my home for the great metropolis with a joyous heart, building up in my mind the great things I was going to achieve in the future. But my good parents were left with doubt and anxiety in their hearts.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SETTLING IN LONDON—"THE GRAPHIC"

My parents again desired me to live with a family rather than in lodgings by myself. Very reluctantly did I give way to this wish, and the home of a fellow-student was chosen. The arrangement soon proved an impossible one : I was lodger, yet without the freedom of such ; I was debarred from having the models I wanted ; I had to conform to the hours in which the family took their meals ; and, what was worse than all, had to share the bed with the student.

The only work I did there was a small water-colour drawing of the student's sister. I was more taken with the rather old-fashioned silk dress she wore than with the young lady herself. I represented her in a standing position, contemplating a sketch, which she held at arm's length. Well, Alfred Stevens

and Whistler have both painted pictures with no more subject, that have nevertheless become celebrated. I had not yet heard the trite saying : “It is not *what* you do, but *how* you do it.” I had the temerity to send this “raw ” drawing to the Royal Academy that same year, 1869. Wonderful to relate, it was not only hung, but was hung in a place of honour—that is, in the centre of a wall, on the line. When I think of the quality of that drawing, I am forced to believe that the standard of the water-colours sent to the Academy at that time was at a pretty low ebb. The room now numbered IX., usually known as the “gem room,” was in those days used for the water-colours. If the standard had not been so low, I do not see how so much favour could have been shown to a drawing that could make but little claim to merit. However, the mere fact of its being hung entitled me to a ticket for the soirée. I was most anxious to attend, but alas, I had no dress suit. The only way out of my difficulty was to hire one. I consequently went to a pawnbroker’s shop in King’s Road, Chelsea, where I got the article I needed. The charge

for one night's loan was 10/6. I won't answer for the fit, but it gave me the entrée to the Academy that evening, and nobody, I thought, would know that I had not been "brought up" on dress suits. Describing the scene to a friend in a letter, I said it was "the grandest assembly of people I have ever seen."

The arrangement of living with a family finally became intolerable, and in the spring of this year, 1869, I took lodgings in Smith Street, Chelsea. The front room on the first floor looked to the north, and had two French windows leading to a balcony. The back room—separated by folding doors—was to be my sleeping apartment. Whilst waiting for some necessary furniture from my parents, I met a student at Victoria Station whose acquaintance I had made at St. Martin's School of Art. I told him of my venture, and he immediately suggested joining me in the day-time, as he had a home with his parents. He took a great fancy to me. I was amusingly eccentric to him, and he always *sought* amusement. Life was in no way a serious thing to him; he was always in good humour, and seemed to laugh—with a

“catching” laugh—at everything. I at once accepted his suggestion to work with me, for there was something that drew us together, although he was the very antithesis in character to myself. He was easy-going, lazy, and exceedingly amiable, with an imperturbable temper which often wrought me up to a state of fury. He had the fatal habit of preluding his words with — “Now, old chap, don’t fly out at what I am going to say !” Needless to say, I “flew out” before his words were uttered.

He certainly dispelled many of the black moments that came to me at that time, and under his guidance we did the silliest and most inane things, over which I will draw a veil. Let us not throw stones at the ridiculous things students do, be they art-students or University students, of any country : all have gone through the *inane phase*, and found fun in it—fun in what we now consider beneath contempt.

The furniture my parents sent me came by instalments, but when my front room was finally made comfortable, my companion said, “Let us do a subject together—have a

model"; he knew a female model, and possessed a Greek dress of transparent gauze: "Do something classical, rather!" I was much smitten with the idea; but now for the subject of this classical work. After much consultation we decided on a Greek girl feeding fish in a little pool around a fountain. The coming of this model was an event (for I had not spoken to a live female model, and had not drawn from one since my Munich days). She was a Frenchwoman, and by no means very young, although she assumed a naive youthfulness, for she brought a doll with her, with which she played like a child. She was very well dressed, very chic, very amusing with her broken English, and altogether a person of great importance—certainly to my inexperienced eye. When the moment came to pay her, we were afraid to offer her the money, thinking she might be offended. How to give her the money troubled us all the day; at last I hit upon the idea of asking her for her purse, so that I might place the money in it. This was a mistake, for it aroused her suspicions, and she got into a violent temper, asking what I wanted her

purse for. When I explained, and she saw the actual cash in my hand, she laughed loudly, and we felt fools.

Well, the classical pictures were never finished; the subject being too new for me, I took little interest in it. After this, the sharer of my room came less and less frequently, and finally only dropped in as a friend—which suited me well.

It was getting towards the autumn in the year 1869, when a former student at Kensington, whose father was a carpenter on a gentleman's estate in Sussex, suggested that several of us should come to his home and work there: we could live very cheaply in his parents' cottage. This was very alluring to me, for I was just then only pottering with work in a very dissatisfied way, and, what was worse, earning next to nothing. With the consent and monetary help once more of my parents, I joined E. F. Brewtnall (afterwards R.W.S.) and William Wise (both Kensington students) in this little experiment. We three kept very much together. We walked together, and (what often proved to be very impracticable) saw subjects together. This



PORTRAIT OF MYSELF,  
WITH MY TWO ELDEST CHILDREN.

(From an Etching, 1879.)



sometimes caused a little friction. An effect, a picturesque figure of a peasant at work, or a bit of landscape, would strike us all at the same moment : then one would say, "I'm going to paint that" ; another, "The subject is mine, I saw it first," and so on. We never quarrelled, however, and each man soon settled down to his own subject. I found my subject in a group of peasants *hoeing* in a turnip field. I was struck at once with the pictorial aspect of the scene, with the strong relief of these figures against the trees in the background, which were in their autumnal garb, rich in russet and gold. Then, whilst I was watching, a little girl approached the oldest man of the group, and handed him some refreshments. He stiffly and slowly straightened his back, and remained standing whilst the others were in various attitudes at their work. The child gave the final touch to the sentiment, as I thought. I was glad to have been unaccompanied when I saw this, as there could be no dispute about the copyright. I looked long and hard at the scene and tried to take it all in, then returned to the house, and sketched out the group and designed the lines

of the background. For this drawing I used the largest piece of paper I had. These few strokes on that paper suggested to me the picture, and I could clearly see it in my mind's eye. Whether I had the manipulative skill to render it had yet to be seen, but I felt no nervousness when I started to paint. I dashed at it in my impulsive way, and worked very rapidly. This rapidity of work was not quite to the liking of my comrades, as it gave me more to show at the end of the day than either of the other two.

Our evenings were as lively as we could make them with the resources at our command. Quite a little air of romance was given to our stay by the presence of a young lady who was living with the family—indeed, had been brought up by them. There was a mystery about this damsel that we could never fathom, for the old lady knew how to keep her counsel. The girl was decidedly good-looking, but was badly educated, knew nothing, and cared for nothing, laziness being her strong point. However, we all flirted with her, but, let me add, quite harmlessly. Now, Brewtnall had a gift for making doggerel

rhymes, and I could compose tunes on my zither, so he and I got up a little conspiracy to give the company a surprise one evening. He wrote some verses (of course, all about the girl and ourselves), and there was a chorus, repeated after each verse, all of which I put to music. This chorus ran as follows :—

One was a yeoman, stalwart and bold (Rassall) ;  
One was a German, a regular beau (myself) ;  
One was a Saxon, with hair like gold (Brewtnall, who had  
red hair) ;  
And the other was a knight from Pimlico (Wise, who lived  
in that district).

It was a great success, and everybody enjoyed roaring and shouting in the chorus. Foolish and silly it all appears at this distance of time, but there was nothing vicious about it : it was the result of youthfulness in the enjoyment of health and high spirits. I have lingered somewhat over this episode, as it was the last time that that particular phase appeared in my life. Of the picture I painted, which became the starting-point of my career, I shall speak presently.

Before I returned to Chelsea, I paid my parents a visit in Southampton, for I was specially eager to show them my picture—

the first I had succeeded in painting that could be called a *picture*.

This home-coming of mine was a great event to the parents. On that day the mother's pupils were sent home earlier than usual, so as to give her time to cook some special Bavarian dish of which she knew I was particularly fond. The father was putting the finishing touches to a "settle" that he had made as a surprise for me, and which was destined for my Chelsea lodgings. A spotless white cloth on the little table, four candlesticks with tall candles burning—an unheard-of extravagance at any other time—greeted me. I rapidly unpacked my picture, and hung it on the wall.

My father was deeply moved: he had not expected such a sudden advance in my work; he could not speak, but drew me to him, and held me in a long embrace. The mother could not judge the picture, but she could understand the meaning of it all, and her tears were those of joy. Then we sat down to that meal, and oh! so devoutly and purely happy—all three, all three for different reasons!

That visit made me realize how hard it

was for my parents to give me the money I still needed. No doubt they had expected a quicker return in my earnings when I had settled in London. I felt this, and smarted under the idea that I was still dependent on them. When I returned to Chelsea there was no better outlook : I was earning nothing, although I did some drawings on the block, which I took to the Dalziel Brothers in hopes that they would be able to place them for publication ; but there was a "slump" in that kind of illustration. I had my large water-colour drawing, but that was not convertible into money at that time. Then I reduced my expenses in my diet, and lived on bread, butter, cheese, and porridge—this for weeks, too. My former companion sometimes came to see me, and of course laughed, and was merry ; and I laughed too, but was not merry in my heart. Something *had* to be done—this drag on the parents must cease.

There was a troupe of Christy Minstrels performing in London (not the well-known Moore and Burgess Minstrels), and I sought an evening engagement with them as a zither

player. This engagement, as I have already stated in a former chapter, fortunately did not come off.

Then I heard of some work at the South Kensington Museum, for which young students were wanted. It was a common job, a decoration for the Ceramic Gallery of the Museum, and most of it had to be done mechanically by stencilling, with just a little touching up by hand.

A fellow-student and I obtained this work, and our payment was 9d. an hour. Well, we worked no end of hours, but somehow did not produce much in the time. Mr. Redgrave, R.A., who was inspector, came round one day and declared that the work was not satisfactory as to quantity, and told us to do it piece-work. Then we did *too much* in the time, and were again called over the coals.

This work at least gave me some money in hand—money of my own earning; and after receiving the first week's payment I gave myself a treat—I went to an "eating-house" for a good square meal of meat and vegetables. Soon I had enough money in



hand to venture on something more in keeping with my art, in conformity with my ambition, and in consonance with my independent nature. On the morning of my last visit to the Museum I purposely came late; my companion was steadily at work, as usual. I entered the room with the air of a man who was on strike: "Look here, old chap," I said, "I can't stand this work any longer; it is too degrading." "Well," he answered, "what are you going to do?" I told him that I had taken a long walk on the preceding Sunday to Wimbledon Common, where I saw some gipsies in camp, who were making clothes-pegs. "I am going to draw that," I answered, "and try and get it taken by the new illustrated paper, *The Graphic*." I was eager to do this subject, for had not Walker drawn and painted gipsies? My companion tried to dissuade me from the venture; he thought it most risky. "Well, let it be risky. I am going to *do* it, whatever happens; I have the money to buy a page block (costing a sovereign), a few shillings for the models, and I have paid my lodgings for another week." I immediately walked back to

Wimbledon Common, and arranged with the woman and a boy to come to my lodgings in Chelsea. Now, to get a gipsy woman with a baby to come all the way from Wimbledon Common to Chelsea, with but little money to give her, was a moral feat. The young man, a great hulking fellow of some seventeen years, was easily managed, as I could satisfy him with a huge rabbit pie; but the woman did her utmost to increase the sum I had promised her, by resorting to fortune-telling. These fortunes began in rosy hues, but altered for the worse as she realized that the money first promised her was all that would be forthcoming. I made my studies, however, and then drew them on to the block, not, alas, in the free way in which these studies were done, but in careful line, as exact facsimile work was always insisted upon by the engravers in those days. When the block was finished, I took it to *The Graphic* office.

Now, Mr. W. L. Thomas, the founder and manager of *The Graphic*, had a sort of watchdog, that all applicants had to pass before being allowed to enter his private room.

This watch-dog had a little kennel, *i.e.* a tiny room at the top of the stairs, where he worked (between his “barking”) at wood-engraving. He gave me a curt reception. “Mr. Thomas is engaged; you can’t see him.” He became insolent. “Dozens of you fellows come here every day.” I answered, “Very sorry; I must again ask you to show the Manager my drawing,” during which sentence I opened my parcel, and laid the drawing on his table. He cast a sidelong glance at it, and said, “Well, I’ll take it, but I know he won’t see you.” It was not long before he returned, and said, “The Manager wants to see you.” As I entered, Mr. Thomas (seated at his engraving) was holding my block, and closely examining it. As I approached him he turned, readjusted his eyeglass, held out his hand, and said: “How are you?” “Thank you, sir, quite well.” “But,” he added, “where have you been, or what have you done? I have not seen any of your work before.” “No, sir, I have not had the chance of doing any, beyond small drawings for the Dalziels, and I have done this block as a venture.” Then came the verdict: “Well,

as much work as you like to do of *this* quality I shall be glad to have."

Unforgettable words! I received £8 on the spot for that drawing, and I have never lacked work from that day to this. On my way out I passed the open door of the watch-dog's kennel, glared at him, showed my empty hands to denote that my block was taken, and, at the risk of breaking my neck, dashed down the steep stairs, two steps at a time, and hurried home to write to my parents of my good fortune. Here at last was something tangible, something that meant a future; it now only depended on me to make money and a reputation. I honestly confess that money-making was my first thought, money wherewith to repay my parents, and to render their lives easier.

I paid a second visit to *The Graphic* office at the earliest date that decency permitted; the watch-dog this time wagged his tail, and readily announced me to Mr. Thomas, who saw me at once; but a disappointment awaited me. I came to ask to be supplied with subjects, as other draughtsmen were. "No," said Mr. Thomas, "you look for your

own subjects." In my heart I bitterly resented these words, but they were the words I needed: *they were the making of me as an artist!* My first day's search for a subject was abortive. It was the same on the day following. On the third, a Sunday, I wandered in a sort of aimless way, perhaps for want of something better to do, into the Chapel of the Royal Hospital, which was situated at the end of my street. I was put into one of the side pews allotted to visitors, for the whole body of the chapel was occupied by the old pensioners, wearing their red coats. What grand old heads! *here* was a subject of the first water! The service, the sermon, and the music were non-existent for me. I was alone with my subject. After service I lingered on, got into conversation with one or two of the veterans, and soon found there would be no difficulty in getting them to sit—for a consideration. Before I went to bed that night my design was made, and the next day I made the studies of two of the foremost in the group; one a fine bullet-headed old fighting Irishman, who had seen much service; the other a man with finely-

cut features of the Wellingtonian type, who had seen very little service. They constituted my principal contrasts. These studies were done in chalk, on rather smooth paper, and with a freedom that was somewhat lost in transposing that technique to line on the block. Unfortunately in those days photography was not yet a practicable thing for the transfer to the block of a drawing made on paper. In that case the engravers would always have had the drawing to refer to: as it was, the original drawing was cut away, and the only satisfaction left to the artist was to growl at the engraver. In only too many cases the creed of the latter was—"cut through that shower of lines, never mind what the artist drew," with the result that we could barely recognize our own work. Mr. Thomas was delighted with my drawing of the Pensioners, and gave me, I think, £10 for it. When it appeared in *The Graphic*, in spite of the cruel destruction of my artistic lines it was hailed as the work of a man of promise.

Another great event came to me in April of that year, 1870. My large water-colour drawing

of peasants hoeing was sent to the Dudley Gallery, along with the drawings of Brewtnall and Wise. My readers must know that the Dudley Gallery in those days sufficed as a nursery for those exclusive galleries the Old and New Water-Colour Societies. An anxious time followed the sending in of my picture. After every morning's post I would go to Brewtnall's room (he had lately settled a few doors below me in Smith Street, with E. J. Gregory) to know whether he also had not yet received a notice of rejection. Presently I received a private letter from the Secretary of the Gallery, asking me to call. I immediately rushed into Brewtnall's lodgings with my letter, asking him if he could understand what it meant. He could not, but thought it distinctly strange, suggesting that something must be wrong. This *I* also thought, and I walked with a curious oppression on me to the Gallery. Knocking at the closed door, which was opened by the Gallery attendant, I was shown into the secretary's room. Room ! It was merely a large cupboard, choked up with rejected pictures, leaving but little space for the secretary's writing-table. I had just

time for a rapid and anxious glance round those unhappy pictures, fearing to see my own, when the secretary rose, and, shaking hands with me, said he was "very glad" to make my acquaintance. Instinctively I felt that something good was in store for me. He then told me that the hanging committee had asked him to write and request me to *raise the price* of my drawing, adding (strictly in confidence) that *my picture was hung in the place of honour*. Afterwards I heard that the hanging committee consisted of Mr. (now Sir Edward) Poynter, Mr. H. S. Marks (afterwards R.A.), and Mr. Arthur Severn. It was a signal service they did me by their generous action at a critical moment of my career.

My friend Mr. Edward Dalziel persuaded Mr. Strahan, the publisher, to buy this drawing for the price recommended by the hanging committee, £40. With this sum, and with the money obtained for one or two *Graphic* drawings after "The Pensioners," I had something substantial in hand; I could send some money to my parents, and still have enough to pay for a couple of months of painting in the country. But I had set my



heart on getting some new impressions, and selected the little fishing village of Tréport, not far from Dieppe.

It certainly *was* a fishing-village, pure and simple ; not a tree was within two or three miles of it. To me, who so loved trees, it was indeed a strange experience ; but the picturesqueness of the figures, and the newness of the whole scene, fully occupied my mind, and shut out for the time my love for green swards and foliage. The scare of the impending Franco-German war was in the air, and had even reached that fishing-village. One day I saw a woman sitting on her fish-basket, with an eager group around her, reading the latest news. Here was the nucleus for my subject : "Reading War-News." After having designed my group I got the different characters one by one to sit for me. They were most polite and amiable people. In the courtyard behind my small lodgings, where I worked, there was always a little curious crowd around me, standing in a semicircle, watching my brush with the greatest interest. Their behaviour was unimpeachable ; I do not say that they did not sometimes indulge in a little

banter at the expense of the model, but never at mine.

This went on for some four weeks, but when war was really declared, knowing that I was a German they rather altered their attitude towards me ; it was not very marked, but it was enough to make me uncomfortable. Of course, they pitied me—pitied the whole German nation, for how could they resist this new weapon of the French government, the *Mitrailleuse*, which could shoot down three hundred horses at one shot ? etc. etc.

I thought it best to beat a retreat, as my drawing was sufficiently advanced to enable me to finish it in Chelsea. But I had not yet had my “fill” of a summer’s painting, and decided to go into Devonshire, which was quite new to me. *There* I made up for the want of trees at Tréport, with a vengeance ! I painted an orchard, with as vicious a green as my colour-box would produce. Into that orchard I introduced the nice-looking children of the vicar of the place, whose acquaintance I had made. This emerald-green orchard and my Tréport fisher-folk were sent in due course to the Dudley Gallery the following

year, and were well hung. That same year, in company with E. J. Gregory (who had meanwhile made a name as a wood-draughtsman), I was invited by the President of the Institute of Painters in Water-Colours to join that institution without the regular competition.

Judging from a letter I wrote to an old friend just before this event, I had given myself six years to gain admission to one of the societies ; but it had come in less than one year. I wrote the following :—

I am happy to inform you that I have been more successful than I anticipated, not only as regards the getting of a living, but I can paint more decently. . . . I am determined . . . to be in some society before six years. If I don't get in by that time, I'll defy them, and wait for the Academy. You know in three or four years one can learn a great deal in painting, that is if you are in earnest.

I give the letter just as it was written, with its mixed tenses and persons.

My social life was limited to the circle of my colleagues and my employers ; Mr. Dalziel, Mr. Swain, and Mr. Thomas. I also visited Mr. Marks and Mr. Leslie, who

were most kind to me. In my little front-room studio in Smith Street, which was already assuming an original type through the furniture my father had made for me, I used, occasionally, to give small supper-parties. What I provided for my friends I cannot remember ; I do remember, however, that the guests who honoured my little diggings included such men as Fildes, Wood, Linton, Gregory, Brewtnall, Pinwell, Charles and Townley Green, and Small. What a bevy of men of talent ! I also remember with pleasure my acquaintance with Charles Keene. He took me to the house of Mr. Boyce, who in addition to being a charming water-colour painter, was also a man of wealth. Often afterwards Keene and I met there to sing trios, Boyce being at the piano. At this period I played the zither a great deal, and became quite a good player, so that when I visited my friends I was always requested to bring the instrument with me. I also hired a piano, and tried to compose waltzes and marches ; I actually had a set of waltzes published by Robert Cox, and a march, arranged for four hands, by Augener, if I

remember rightly. But I have no recollection of much reading, nor of any real attempt to make up for my deficiency in education. I worked very hard at my wood-drawing, and my faculty for seeing subjects rapidly awakened. Mr. Thomas, somewhat relenting, sent me now and again a war-sketch by Sidney Hall (*The Graphic* Special Correspondent at the seat of war) to work out on the block. Between this work, however, I was constantly making studies from the nude in my studio, which acted alike as tonic and art-education, and led me, perhaps unconsciously, into decorative designing.

As I was making quite a respectable income I suddenly resolved, in the early spring of 1871, to break new ground again, and paint in the Bavarian Alps, also to take my father with me. It would be his first holiday—the first he had had since his "Wanderjahre."

I felt no risk, and had no misgivings in this new plan. What if the money I had in hand did *not* hold out for the six months I intended to be away? I could always do a block for *The Graphic*—that was my bank! Before leaving I finished a water-colour drawing

of the "Chelsea Pensioners in Church," a commission from Mr. W. L. Thomas. I also ordered a little wooden studio to be erected in the back garden of my lodgings, which was to be finished and put up by the time I should return.

After seeing that my mother was comfortably settled in her sister's house (where she continued to give her lessons), my father and I set out for Bavaria with joyous anticipations.

## CHAPTER XIV

### BAVARIA, ROMANTIC AND PAINTABLE

THE first visit to the Bavarian Alps was of psychological import to me, and influenced my whole career. The German side of my nature, hitherto quiescent, was now to assert itself. Owing to circumstances, England had first taken hold of my art-vision, and I was led, whilst in a supple state, to understand and love its special aspect. That the influence of my father's mind—a mind so German in its ideals, so persistent, and so intense in its subjectiveness—had also penetrated my being, was not to be wondered at, and the fact was revealed to me in that first visit to the beautiful highlands of my native country. The romance of it all—the paintableness of everything that caught my eyes, from peasant to peak—touched a note in me which had not before been made audible in the same

degree! Yet I was cognisant of Walker's art all the time. Strange "seeing"—strange paradox—such eyes stuck in a German head! I could not, however, point to a figure or to a bit of landscape and truly say, "How like Walker." What I saw was a possibility of treatment in the "spirit" of Walker's art, and with the sentiment that was the keynote to that school of which he was so brilliant an exponent. But it was now to be a sentiment belonging to Bavaria, to be brought out by penetrating the inner characteristics of this people. If my adherence to the Walker school blocked the way to my development, it left me at least this good lesson, which I have carried with me through life—to seek truth in sentiment, and sentiment in truth.

Whether Walker had a personal sympathy with the humanity he painted, or whether it was only an artistic sympathy, I cannot tell, for I never met him, and only saw him at a distance on two occasions. But, as I thought then, no other painter's art (except, perhaps, George Mason's, of which I knew but little) would have given me the type that would adequately express the sentiment I felt to



belong to this people. I *had* to adopt a type of art, since independently I had not yet acquired one.

Strangely enough, I felt that this *type*—this sentiment—could only be adequately expressed in the water-colour medium. I am quite at a loss to explain my idea. Surely sentiment has nothing to do with pigment? It is *expressible* in any pigment, or material, if felt by the painter. The only differences in the result would arise from the limitations or difficulties of the pigment used.

I brought the desire for sentiment in art from England, but I left my English eyes in that country, and I did not paint English peasants in Bavarian costumes; the peasant, as I represented him, was true to nature—Bavarian to the core. Yet there was a “something” in my interpretation that differed from the works of German painters who had been trained in Germany. Another factor in English methods of work was the insistence on truth of light in open-air scenes, which German painters had entirely ignored up to that time. Equipped with these English art-principles, and full of feverish eagerness for

the momentous beginning of my career as a painter of subjects, I settled down in Garmisch for six months' earnest work, with the sweetest of companions—my father.

All who knew Garmisch in those days will remember its charm, its long row of wooden houses burnt by the sun to a rich depth of colour, which formed so splendid a background for figures and flowers. All will remember the long seats in front of those sun-burnt houses, where the home-coming peasant rested for a chat: the wood-cutter, who had worked in the forest during the week and was now eager to hear what had happened in his absence; the hunter, who had not yet aroused feelings of vengeance; the women-folk, who brought their spinning-wheels, which added *their* "hum" to that of the conversation. This was the news-bureau of the village, from which emanated the true and the false news, just as from all other news-bureaux.

The virile mountain people still retained the simple trust in their religion and in their church. The struggle for social equality was unknown to them; they had bravely endured

the hardships of the Franco-German war, had fought with marked coolness, and obeyed the word of command, even though it may have led to death. And those who returned resumed their former life, and thanked God for it. These men, with their women-folk, were my models. Could a painter desire more?

We took a bedroom in a peasant's house ; it was on the first floor, and differed little from other rooms furnished for visitors who wished to live cheaply : whitewashed walls, with here and there a coloured print of a saint, or a Virgin Mary, or other representations of sacred subjects, all more or less grotesque in treatment ; a crucifix in the corner, surrounded by dried plants of various kinds, and objects that had been blessed by the priest—all held in great reverence. Then there were the two single bedsteads, with towering straw mattresses, tiny pillows, and coverlets with the sheets turned over and sewn down, upon which rested a feather bed of such small dimensions that to keep more than a section of the body covered at a time became a fine art ! But the shortness of the bedsteads was the greatest trial ; unless you curled up like a

dog, you soon found your feet dangling over the end. A plain deal table, some wooden chairs, and (strange inconsistency) a modern sofa—cheap and pretentious, thin curtains for the windows, one little washhand-stand, with basin and jug that held about a pint of water, and one small towel that was to serve two people—this constituted the furnishing of such rooms. As for light, in our case there was more than needful, for the room had three outer walls, each with two or three windows. I must not forget the tiled stove, universally used in Bavaria, whose peculiar heat makes one feel giddy.

Once again my father cooked our frugal meals, consisting of farinaceous dishes that did not take long to prepare. Once in a way we would take a meal at the Inn, when I treated myself to meat. The stove in our room being made only for heating purposes, my father had to rely on the "Hausfrau's" cooking stove, which necessitated his waiting until she had finished the meal for her family, when she would call up to us: "Now, gracious sir, you can cook"—in the dialect: "Jetzt, gnä' Herr, können S' kochen."

With the experience of life and fuller understanding of *self*, I realized more and more the truth of the assertion made by some scientists that training cannot eradicate racial peculiarities: infusion of other blood alone can make an alteration in the type. As far as I can ascertain, my family, on both sides, are unmixed Bavarians. One could speculate (with a considerable stretch of probability) that the extensive settlement of the Romans in the district from which my mother came left a track of dark-complexioned, black-haired, and black-eyed people. My mother had jet-black hair and black eyes, with a sallow complexion. So had I (once), and when I first visited Italy I was told by several Italian friends that I looked like "a Roman brought up in Tuscany." Be that far-back influence what it may have been, I certainly found my German blood assert itself on that first visit to the Bavarian Alps. Something more than delight in the picturesqueness of this new ground was aroused in me: I felt it *belonged to me*, and that *I* belonged to *Bavaria*; I was of the same race, and the same blood that flowed in their veins flowed in mine.

On our arrival in Garmisch, after a long carriage-drive (the railway had not yet reached so far), we left our luggage at the lodgings, and then hurried out to prospect the place—as, with my usual impetuosity, I could not wait until the unpacking had been done. It was a drizzly cold day in May. The mist hung low, and entirely shut out the mountains that, we were told, rose almost from the village : one, the “Zugspitze,” to an altitude of 10,000 feet. What would they be like? I had never seen a mountain! It was well perhaps that I could only see the people and their habitations first, as indeed our walk through the village street produced an extraordinary effect on my young impressionable mind, and I was wild with delight at what I saw of the various types of figures, of houses, of backgrounds, etc. A series of ejaculations escaped me, such as: “Look, father, look there—look at that old man in leathern knee-breeches, smoking his long German pipe; and notice its china bowl, covered with enamel paintings,” which, by the way, I found afterwards were of doubtful morality in subject; “how that ‘Zipfelkappe’” (a kind

of knitted cap with a tassel) “sets off his finely-cut features and sunburnt face—what a model! Look at that sturdy wench carrying a ‘Schaffell’ of water on her head”; and again: “Look: that is a real ‘Holzhacker’” (wood-cutter); “his implements for forest-work strapped to his shoulders, his week’s commissariat in his ‘Rucksack’;—he *must* sit to me!” And so it went on—until my steps were suddenly arrested by a sight that seemed, without exaggeration, to stop the beating of my heart for a moment: a rift in the mist, high above us, suddenly revealed the uppermost peak of the “Zugspitze” all aglow with the rays of the setting sun—just the peak and nothing more, the rest still shrouded in the impenetrable vapour! It was a glory framed in grey—with nothing to suggest its possible connection with the earth—it was the splendour of a world that existed only in man’s imagination! Yet it *was* the Zugspitze, upon whose highest crag I stood the year after! When I saw that mountain on the following day, clearly, from base to pinnacle—bereft of all mystery—I felt the pain of a first disillusion!

It was enough for one day. "Komm, Vater, we will go to our lodgings and unpack." Bewildered by the superabundance of subjects I had seen, and with the emotions I had gone through, in addition to the weariness of body occasioned by the long, tedious journey, my father and I retired to bed early, and I knew nothing more until he awoke me at six o'clock the next morning.

After my somewhat painful search for subjects in England, to be now suddenly surrounded by such a quantity of material was almost disconcerting. Fortunately, I concentrated myself at first on three small drawings, which contained but few figures. But it was not long before I started a rather ambitious subject (on my largest piece of paper), entailing a number of figures of various ages, *minus*, however, the everlasting "girl," for I was attracted mostly by the pathos of old age, by the quaintness of the Alpine children, and by the romantic appearance of the men.

As often as my work permitted, my father and I spent the afternoons in the forests, where, on the soft moss, we sat and "visualized"



thoughts. When hunger drew us down from the clouds we would make a fire and boil the water for our tea. And what a feast that frugal meal was with such a setting ! The needs of the body satisfied, we resumed our places on the soft moss by the forest-rivulet, and listened mentally to all the mysticism that the environment suggested. The hours thus spent were dream-hours to us. We spoke little. To my father it was the reincarnation of an old love — Romance ; to me, the birth of a New Understanding.

Reader, have you ever been in a pine-forest, such as clothes the base of a Bavarian mountain ? You stand in nature's cathedral, religious, mystic, with musical murmur of the wind wafting the tops of the stately pines, whose stems rise up on either side of you, straight as pillars of a Gothic edifice. Overhead, dome-like, the branches meet, leaving but little openings that transform the sky into blinking stars. For all the stillness in this forest there is no melancholy ; you stand enchanted, and you no longer wonder why the Germans have peopled these mystic forests with strange existences, with odd little creatures that

burrow in the ground, and hold treasures untold ; with kobold and dwarf, with forest-spirits good and bad ; with fairy-life. You tread foot-deep and repose on moss that is studded with wood-sorrel, bright as emeralds. The fallen tree, rotting on the ground, has a fairy-like growth on it of miniature forms, exquisite in shape, colour, and texture. In these forests the sounds and thoughts of the daily life, with its sordid troubles, are shut off, and the innermost, and truly religious, side of your existence bursts forth from its cage of conventionality, and you live a life of *mind* for the time being. You dream, dream, dream ! The little blinking stars overhead are gone ; a darkness creeps imperceptibly through the forest, when suddenly a shaft of red light illumines a few stems. Still dreaming, you barely realize that it is the last rays of the setting sun, and that night is creeping on apace. You cannot rise yet from your bed of moss ; you watch the fading of the red light ; you feel the darkness deepening, yet you cannot awaken ; you *will not* awaken, for the German forest has cast its spell over you ! And *that Spell* was my New Understanding.

I returned to the struggles of my art with a mind that had been refreshed by the contrast. Thus it was that my father led me to understand the great truth—that perpetual productivity impoverishes, rather than strengthens, the art-faculties unless the repose of *contemplation* is allowed its proper place.

Although my work so far was in water-colours, I thought I would venture on an oil picture, of some four feet in length, before leaving, and decided to do the group of peasants that, returning from work, rested on the bench in front of the largest house by the river-side. Incredible as it may seem, I had, after only those few years, completely forgotten the technique of oil-colour painting, and had absolutely no feeling for it. I used the colours from the tubes, certainly, but thinned them down with benzine, or petroleum, until I could wash them on in the manner of water-colour painting. There was fairly good drawing and characterization in that picture, but the technique was devoid of all *quality*; it was cold, lifeless, and dry. But therein lay just the crazy turn of my mind regarding the stronger medium. The luscious, full-blooded

quality of good oil-painting was detestable to me then.

Well, it was now time to return to England, for me to resume my *Graphic* work and finish my Bavarian pictures, and for my father to join my mother in Southampton. Soon after my arrival in Chelsea, Mr. H. S. Marks and Mr. G. D. Leslie paid me a visit, and bestowed much praise on the water-colour work. But of the oil-colour picture Mr. Marks said, "Don't exhibit *that*, burn it ; you'll do better next year." Kindest and most valuable of advice ! Had I sent that first oil-colour attempt to an exhibition, I certainly should have been unable in after-years to air my pet boast, that I had never been rejected, nor badly hung.

My new studio in the back yard was a great joy to me, although it was only twenty-four feet long, and eight feet wide. What made it especially attractive to me was that one end of it was entirely of glass. This enabled me, for the first time in my life, to have models, both draped and undraped, in the effect of daylight, with comfort. Whilst my memory was still fresh I straightway

started on the design of the picture I was going to paint in Bavaria the next summer. This was my picture, "After the Toil of the Day." It was a landscape, with figures introduced, representing that picturesque street of old sunburnt houses; and on the bench in front of the foremost house I again depicted, in amplified design, the group of peasants resting. Along the banks of the river, which was to the left of the picture, grew, at certain measured intervals, apple trees, which were a great attraction to me, for was not Walker fond of apple trees? Nor could I leave out the flock of geese being driven home by a boy, for had not Walker painted a flock of geese in an English village road as they were being driven home?

I sold all the water-colour drawings that I painted on that first visit to Bavaria, and they were mostly exhibited at the Institute of Painters in Water-Colours. The money I obtained for these drawings, in addition to my earnings on *The Graphic*, gave me a clear Two Hundred Pounds in hand, that is, after paying my frame-maker, my tailor, and the various firms from whom I had bought carpets and

objects wherewith to beautify my lodgings. Now I could take my mother as well as my father to the Alps for six months. In order to give the former a surprise I obtained the whole sum of £200 in gold, and placed it in little piles on the table to show her. That was the real thing ; I have never seen so much actual gold since.

## CHAPTER XV

### SECOND VISIT TO BAVARIA

I DID not experience the emotional surprise on my second visit to Garmisch that so affected me on the first. But without loss of interest, I was, for that very reason, able to go to work in a more business-like way. My ambitious oil-picture was fully designed, and I could, without hesitation, commence to "lay in" the landscape, and start on my various models in their proper places, as I had already, on the previous visit, settled on every man, woman, and child that I had intended to use as models for this picture. I only needed a large easel, which my father made me without delay.

There was a shed in the garden in which the landlord worked at wood-shingle-making. Containing a rough carpenter's bench, it was used to house the hay-cart, and also as a roosting shelter for the chickens at night. By

opening the large doors I could get plenty of light, and so it became a practicable studio. In front of these doors I put up a strange erection, in which I intended to place my models.

During the painting of this picture I was constantly asking myself such questions as these: How did Walker paint apple-trees against the sky? How did he treat his flock of geese? What was the dominant note of colour in his work? Having answered these questions to my own satisfaction, I directed my whole energy to their fulfilment, never allowing *nature to put me out*.

Let me describe how I posed the leading gander of my flock of geese. I had neither practised making rapid sketches of moving creatures nor educated my form-memory; therefore I bethought myself of a device by which I could get the exact drawing of that gander. I bought a fine bird from a peasant, had it killed, and then strung it up in its walking attitude with innumerable pieces of string that were attached to the roof of the model-house. There it stood, strutting proudly towards me, real and natural! With such a *quiet* model I was enabled to get both drawing



and texture of the feathers. This gander had its revenge, however, when, after a few days, it took advantage of the hot weather and became too odoriferous for any place above ground.

For the neglect to practise rapid sketching the tenets of the Walkerian faith (in which I then believed implicitly) were principally to blame. From Pinwell I received the dogma : "Never work from sketches, but always paint direct from nature on your actual picture ; and there should only be this *one* effort from first to last." No doubt I got hold of the wrong end of the idea, for surely Walker made many preliminary studies in water-colour and black-and-white, which he utilized whilst painting his larger pictures.

Well, my picture, "After the Toil of the Day," was painted direct from nature on to the large canvas, with one exception, the girl at the spinning wheel. I had great difficulty in getting her to fit into the picture : she needed more "pictorial treatment" than I was able to secure when painting direct from nature. If my mind had not been so fanatically given over to a particular belief I might

have benefited by this incident, but Pinwell's dictum was ever before me.

Naturally, so important a work took up most of my time ; still, I found leisure to do some drawings for *The Graphic*, in which I began to feel my way to the dramatic aspect of Bavarian life.

Our *ménage* was greatly improved by the presence of my mother, which enabled my father to give his whole time (when not making something for me) to landscape painting, an unspeakable joy to him. The work he did to my "dictation" (as it were) showed what he might have done in painting had chance given him the opportunity in early life to study art. A piano was hired, and duets enlivened the evenings ; these were played by my mother, either with me or with an official's wife who lived next door. This lady was also an excellent zither-player, which gave me a second player for zither duets, greatly to my satisfaction and pleasure.

During this visit I suffered one terrible anxiety for the safety of my parents. They had gone out for a stroll about two hours before sunset. It was a dead-still evening. I

happened to be standing within the doorway of our house, chatting with the landlord, when we simultaneously noticed a curiously-shaped cloud in the little bit of sky seen near the horizon, between the mountains. We remarked how rapidly that black blot was approaching us. Hardly had the words escaped us when a gust of wind, sudden, overpowering, vicious, swept over the village. The shutters of the house flew into the air, as if they had been made of paper; and the long wooden water-gutter at the roof fell plump at our feet. The more recently-built houses, with their zinc roofs, had that metal torn off bodily and thrown a hundred yards off. Trees with trunks of two feet in diameter were torn up by the roots. Where would my parents be? And now came the rain in sheets, a positive "Wolkenbruch." In the house, the family of the peasant were shrieking with fear, crawling about the room on their knees with unlighted "priest-blest" candles in their hands. Outside, the wind and the rain and the crashing of things torn from their positions made a pandemonium of sound never to be forgotten. Where could

my parents be? Would they be safe? These thoughts tortured me almost beyond endurance, for it was an entirely new sensation to have this anxiety about them.

The storm lasted but fifteen minutes; then came a sudden silence—a horrible silence—again. After about half an hour my parents arrived, wet through, but unhurt. It seemed to me as if they had come from another world. The destructive gust overtook them suddenly as they were walking along a main road, on either side of which grew tall trees. Realizing the danger, my father placed his arms around my mother, and forcibly keeping her to the centre of the road, he avoided being near to the trees, from which huge branches were flying in all directions about him. When the danger was over, and they could proceed on their way home, they had to step over many a great tree-trunk that barred the road.

My parents had one other adventure, but it was one of their own making; and although it caused a certain amount of nervousness on the part of my mother, it gave my father great delight. They wished to take advantage

of my three days' absence for my first mountain-climbing expedition, to visit an isolated peasant's house, some four hours' walk from Garmisch, from which a superb view of the Zugspitze could be obtained. As almost the entire path to it lay through the dense forest it was a favourite tour for visitors. Somehow or other my parents started rather late in the day for this long walk. Added to this they lost their way, and found darkness coming on before they could retrace their steps and find the right path that led to the house. What was to be done? It was impossible to go forward or backward with safety—for that was before the days when the "Verschönerungs-Vereine" in Bavaria had made paths, and signs of direction, to every spot worth visiting. What was to be done? My mother got very nervous, but my father, secretly, deep down in his heart, saw a chance of gratifying a long-felt wish—to spend a night by fire-light in the forest! The decision was quickly made. My father gathered some dry branches and lighted a fire, which soon shot up its ruddy flames, and illumined the trees in a weird way. He cut

some spruce branches, and made a bed for my mother of that sweetly-scented growth. But the fitful light of the fire only increased my mother's nervousness : it made her constantly look round and fancy she saw somebody or something coming that would cause danger. Yet no living human being was likely to molest them there at that time of night, and if a stray stag passed it would only add to the romance of the situation. As it was midsummer the night was short, and at daybreak my parents soon found the right track, and reached the peasant's house after an hour's walk. This hour of arrival was so unusually early that the peasant—who had still an over-night “Schnapps” *drunk* on him—thought he saw spectres ; moreover, from stoking in the night, my parents were begrimed and blackened, hands and face. However, after a wash, and some refreshing coffee, they felt only the enjoyable side of the adventure.

I presume my mountain-climbing experience was similar to that of all others. I certainly had the craze to get higher, always higher. Strange to say, the *artist* was obliterated in me for the time being.

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The grand scenery gave me no artistic thrill—it was all physical, the pleasure felt by youth in the possession of a steady head and lithe limbs. It was pretty rough climbing, too, up that Zugspitze in those days, before the organized paths had been made as they exist in the present day. There is even an observatory built near the summit now, with telephonic communications to the valley below; and a comfortable overnight hut has since been built near it.

## CHAPTER XVI

### ENGLAND AT CLOSER QUARTERS

THERE was immediate work to do for *The Graphic* on my return to England ; but I was greatly exercised to find a purchaser for my large oil-picture. Dealers had taken no note of me, and I knew that it would be highly impolitic for me to approach *them*. The price was soon settled in my mind. As a colleague had sold his first oil-picture for £600, I certainly intended to get £500 for mine. As a matter of courtesy I gave my early patron the first refusal. He offered me a sum that was £20 short of my price ; this I refused to take.

Quite unexpectedly, and through the strangest of circumstances, a purchaser was found. Riding one day in an omnibus I got into conversation with a gentleman sitting next to me. As will be imagined, it did not



take long before I launched out into "shop-talk." He then informed me that his father, who had been a collector, had left him a number of landscapes by Nasmyth, and I received an invitation to go and see them. I didn't know Nasmyth from Adam, but I joyfully accepted. Curiously enough, we were both going to the Old Masters exhibition, and there I had some further conversation with him. At parting I took the opportunity to ask *him* to my studio, and he in turn readily agreed to come.

Before he came, however, he wrote and asked me if he might bring a friend with him. Might? Drag in the whole world, I thought! The friend he brought was Mr. Waller, the builder, whose workshops abutted on the garden in which my studio was located. Daily, in the working hours, I used to hear the "hum" of the wood-working machines—little dreaming that the same sound would one day gladden my ears in my own workshops at Bushey. Well, both gentlemen seemed pleased with the picture, but, if I remember rightly, said little. It was not many days before I received a letter

from Mr. Waller asking if *he* might bring a client of his. Again the same generous thought crossed my mind—drag in the whole world ! On the appointed day he came with his client, Mr. C. W. Mansel Lewis (for whom he was making great additions to his castle in Wales)—a handsome, refined young man, who had just come into his property and was spending his money freely on works of art. Mr. Waller lingered behind, and asked me the price, but, beyond that, nothing was said with regard to a possible purchase.

Some few days after this visit, as I sat in my little studio *glaring* at my picture, and wondering what its fate would be, I gradually fell asleep ; I was not aware of having dropped off until a knock at the door fully awakened me. Opening the door I found Mr. Waller. I noticed that he had a piece of paper in his hand, of a pink colour, which turned out to be a cheque ! He said : “ Mr. Lewis, whom I brought the other day, wishes to buy your picture, and I bring you, at his request, the cheque for £500 ; and further, he hopes you will accept a commission for another work at £250.” Was I dreaming, or

was it all real? No, there could be no mistake—for the cheque was in my hand!

I was somewhat puzzled at the wording of the cheque: "To Order." All the cheques I had hitherto received had been made out "To Bearer," and I could get them cashed over the counter. But I was not going to expose my ignorance by offering this one at the bank without further information. I therefore called on Mr. Swain, the engraver, and requested him to enlighten me. He soon made things clear, and further advised me to open an account with the London and Westminster Bank. Armed with a letter of recommendation I paid my cheque into this bank, and received a book of fifty cheques.

Now I had never written out a document of this kind, and was obliged once again to resort to Mr. Swain's tutoring. It was fortunate that I did so, for I might have fallen into the mistake ascribed to a lady who had overdrawn her banking account in her husband's absence, and, on being remonstrated with by the irate husband, declared that it was impossible she should have overdrawn, as she had only used *half* the cheques he had left her.

My picture, which I called "After the Toil of the Day," was exhibited in the Royal Academy, and was hung on the line. I used to stand in front of the picture and listen to remarks ; but that is a habit of which one soon gets cured ! What I heard there, almost without exception, from those whose attention had been arrested by my picture, was : " Oh, here's a Walker." In later years I was told that this imitation did not in any way please Walker.

The picture, as I have said, was hung on the line ; and in spite of its Walkerian aspect was received with considerable favour by the public, to whom my Bavarian peasants were new ; by the painters, who thought they saw signs of a coming man ; and by the press, who accepted it on all these counts, albeit guardedly.

With £500 in the bank, a market for my water-colours, and as much black-and-white work as I cared to do, I felt I could carry out my long-felt wish to establish my parents in a home of my own making, one that should be within easy reach of London, and in which I could join them when not at work in

Chelsea. My mother was loath to give up her teaching and her independence (my father was already working for our future house), but I felt sure the task of weaning my mother from her work was only a matter of time. It was the more necessary as she was far from strong. Having inherited her ceaseless energy I could well understand her dread of what she called "an idle life," and of having to depend wholly on me. Yet it was just *this dependence* that I was longing to bring about.

Her leave-taking of her pupils was most touching, for they had long learnt to appreciate her great heart and strength of character. It was not only for lessons that they came to her, but for her counsel.

My mother put together all the books in which were entered the lessons she had given from the time we arrived in America to the time when, to please me, she gave up her beloved work. These books are the sweetest legacies she could have left me, and they are now sacredly kept under glass in the little parental museum in my "Mutterturm" at Landsberg. Self-sacrifice for, and unbounded kindness to others were characteristics that

dominated her nature. Her pure mind had a strange touch of spirituality, which gave her at moments a wonderful power of telepathy. Without exception, she always knew the hour, or even the moment, when I fell ill—no matter at what distance I might have been from her. Always ailing a little, and often in much pain, she was never known away from her post at the piano for more than a day. The exceptionally tender care and nursing of my father certainly saved her many a serious collapse.

I rented a cottage at Bushey, near Watford, for my parents. The reason for choosing this Hertfordshire village was because my early patron, Mr. C. E. Fry, lived in Watford. Bushey, when I first settled my parents there in the winter of 1873, was a sleepy, picturesque place. It had no water laid on, and there was no sanitation except of the most primitive kind. The drinking-water was brought to the houses in buckets, for which the old people, who carried it round, charged a halfpenny a bucket. The one and only well from which they could obtain this drinking-water was situated quite near the

churchyard, a rather doubtful proximity, according to our modern ideas. There was of course the usual well attached to each house for collecting rain-water, which I remember was considerably stocked with live matter. A few years later a deep well was sunk at Watford, from which an inexhaustible supply of the best water was brought to Bushey and the neighbourhood. When I first came to Bushey there was not even a completed railway station, nothing but a little shanty and a porter.

I never liked town life, and Bushey, besides giving me the joy of living with my parents, offered me much subject-matter to paint. The cottage I rented was semi-detached, and quite of the simple order, with none of the conveniences that are now to be found in almost every newly-built workman's dwelling. But with our furniture it soon assumed an aspect that showed even the most casual observer that the occupants might not be the kind of people who usually rented such cottages. A small room with a skylight was used by my father for his work ; yet, small as it was, there was still some space left for

me to paint from a village model. A little garden, both front and back, wherein grew fruit-trees, completed a truly happy abode.

This year of 1873 must be named as a serious turning-point in my life. I had advanced from wood-drawing to water-colour painting with success, and had now been admitted to a space on the line in the Academy with an oil-picture of six feet, which was well received. So far the outside, as it were, of my career. Temperamentally I had many difficulties that harassed me : impetuosity and hastiness of temper, and undue high spirits with their usual depressing counteraction, to which must be added an undefinable unrest of mind—all disturbed the satisfaction that should have been mine at that period. It was always something *different*, something *more*, something *not yet attained*, that my nature seemed to grope for. The present might have been a fantasy, for it seemed hardly real to my state of mind. What the next development was to be I did not know, but it came as suddenly and unexpectedly as disastrously.

I had seen little or nothing of society up to that date. I do not remember having been



invited to a dinner-party of the upper classes. I had visited the studios of my colleagues, and the houses of my employers. I stuck to my few friends, and there my "Welt" began and ended.

In that year, and under those circumstances, I met the lady who was to become my wife. German by birth and education, older than myself, this lady was yet hardly a helpmeet in my life. When I further add that she was of a delicate constitution, which soon turned her into a confirmed invalid, the situation will be understood. Her serious illness of congestion of the lungs soon after marriage was the beginning of a ten years' martyrdom on her part, and a trial on mine which, but for the help of two rare friends, would in all probability have killed me. As my wife was progressing towards recovery the first nurse was replaced by another—a Miss Griffiths—who, long before it was fashionable for ladies to take to nursing, made this work her life's mission. Her first appearance in our family must be noted here, as she will be often mentioned in these pages.

At this time my work in England was

practically suspended for months. I thought a chance was in store for me when, on the recommendation of the doctor, I took my wife to a mild part of the Bavarian Alps—Ramsau, near Berchtesgaden.

This village, nestling so picturesquely in a hollow, with its exceptionally luxurious vegetation, certainly *was* mild in its climate—not to say enervating. Still, it provided me with a type of peasant differing considerably from that in and around Garmisch. The houses, though fewer in number, were inhabited by large families; and one house alone supplied me with ten models, ranging in age from five to seventy years.

I was, however, only able to get two small water-colour drawings done during that visit: “Im Wald,” and “Der Bittgang.” Into the details of our return journey I will not enter; suffice it, that it took *five weeks*. On the 8th of December 1874, our boy was born in Bushey.

## CHAPTER XVII

### “THE LAST MUSTER”

DOMESTIC events had caused me to miss a year in the Academy. The almost constant attendance at the bedside of my invalid wife entirely precluded any attempt at a big picture ; but the certainty was forcing itself upon me that I could not retain the ground I had gained in my art unless I could produce another work better than the first.

I had set my heart on a large and amplified version of my “Chelsea Pensioners in Church.” All my artist-friends, however, tried to dissuade me from the venture, declaring that I could make nothing of those red coats, and further, that the public would not be interested in a lot of old men. This opposition rather strengthened than weakened my resolution.

But Christmas had come and gone, yet I had not even stretched my canvas. The year

1875 had already come in when only this preparatory stage had been reached.

Once again I used but the raw linen, with a coating of size. That being stretched, and the glass end of my little studio in Chelsea pasted up in places with brown paper, so as to imitate the cross-lights of the Chapel as they fell on my models, I feverishly began to sketch in the central figure and the man on the bench in front of him from life, merely *guessing* at the relative correctness of their positions. Probably no important picture on that scale was ever proceeded with in so crazy and haphazard a manner as I thought proper to pursue in painting this subject.

I intended to keep the main design as it appeared in *The Graphic* five years previously. I made no preliminary studies, and took no measurements of the architectural background, but I resorted to an eminently practicable method for getting the correct sizes of the heads as they retreated, and another method, equally advantageous, for securing the perspective of the black and white marble slabs of the floor. The former was simple: I placed a pensioner on the nearest seat, and

another right over on the other side of the Chapel, and then sketched the two heads as they appeared in size, one against the other, so to speak. But for the latter—the lines of the marble slabs—some more scientific procedure was requisite.

As I knew nothing of perspective, and had not then heard that draughtsmen existed who made it their business to "doctor" or work out pictorial perspective at so much an hour, my father suggested that I should resort to an "Old Master Dodge," one that was used and illustrated by Albrecht Dürer, which we carried out as follows: First we drew the squares on a large board, and laid this flat on the table. Then, by placing myself so as to obtain the right point of sight, and looking through a pin-hole fixed at arm's-length from a glass set upright in a frame, I was able to draw on that glass the lines of the floor in their correct foreshortening; and this gave the absolutely true perspective, whatever may be said of the legitimacy of the means by which it was consummated. I then placed a piece of slightly damped paper on the glass (the latter having had a weak coating of size)

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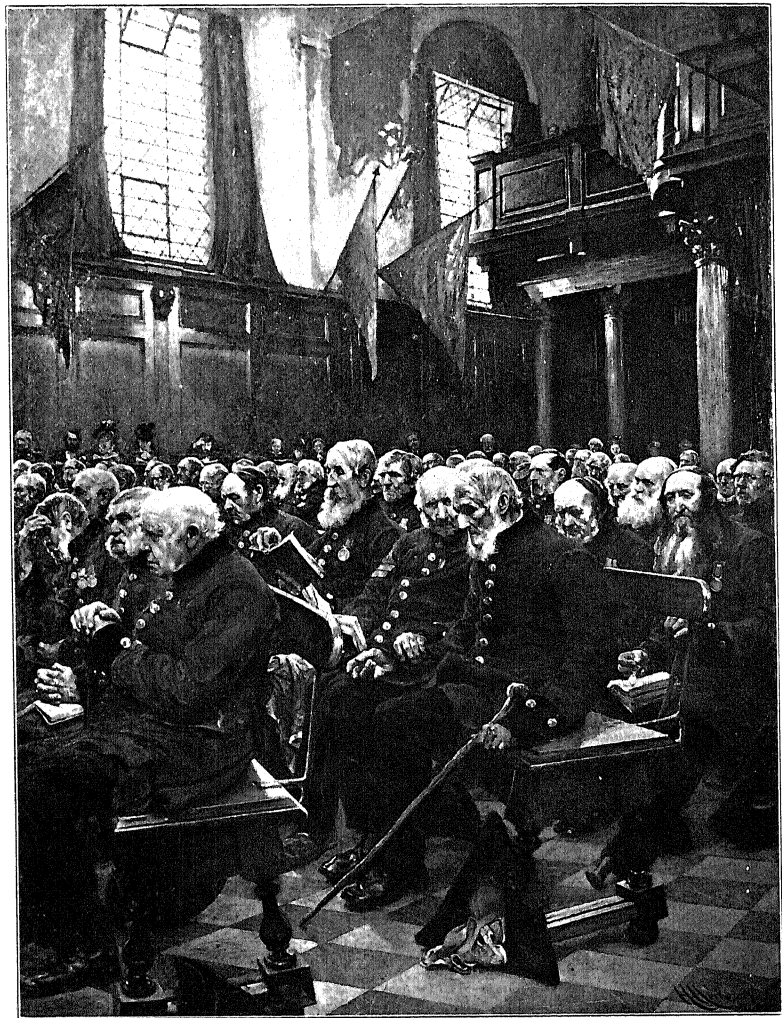
which, by being rubbed at the back, rendered a perfect impression of the ink lines I had traced on that sheet of glass ; of course it was reversed, but that did not matter. This tracing I enlarged to full size the right way round, and then I copied these correctly foreshortened slabs of black and white marble into my picture between the feet and legs of the pensioners, when, behold ! a magical result. With the exception of resorting to these two devices, all was guess-work in my methods of procedure. But guess-work or no guess-work, I never altered the position of a single head or figure.

The perspective of the background bothered me considerably. I used to sit in the Chapel and look and look at it until the oblique perspective soaked itself into my brain. Of this background I made a water-colour sketch, from which I was compelled to work, as, greatly to my distress, I could not place my large picture in the Chapel for direct work.

As I have already stated, my studio in Chelsea was twenty-four feet long, and but eight feet wide ; yet it was in that *box-studio* that I painted "The Last Muster." If I

**“THE LAST MUSTER.”**

**(Oil Painting, 1875.)**





guessed at the relative positions of the figures in the composition, the judgment of my painting, whilst at work, was even more a matter of guessing, my only corrector being a mirror at my side. When not working from the model I could place the picture at the end of the studio and obtain a tolerably good view of it; but owing to the nearness of the skylight above it, the picture assumed a brilliancy that it could not sustain in other lights. The fatal error of working with a near light is known to all artists, but they only become aware of it by experience. How low my skylight was will be gathered from the following incident. For this large canvas it was necessary to buy an upright easel, with a screw movement for raising and lowering it. One day, wishing to work at the boots, I *wound* up the easel; but before the desired height had been reached, the upper part of the easel crashed through the skylight, and a shower of broken glass came down on my head.

Towards the end of February the picture was still far from being finished, yet my strength was perceptibly decreasing. It is

always undesirable to force work into a given time, albeit I have done so through my life with varying effects on my constitution. At this period such forcing was particularly dangerous, since there was no rest for me after the day's work that, in itself, was almost too much for me.

I now found that I could no longer stand to my work ; a perpetually drowsy feeling overcame me, which I knew to be the forerunner of a breakdown. The picture *must* at all hazards be done for that year's Academy ; but how ? I was a total abstainer, and would not dream of resorting to alcoholic stimulants. Some one said I needed exercise ; but I had neither the strength nor the time for that. Still, the remark struck me as being right, and the question arose as to how I could obtain exercise without interruption to my work. Then I heard of a machine, invented by an American, that was said to have saved many an overworked brain, and was called the "health lift." Knowing where one of these was to be found I immediately purchased it, and established it in my studio. It was a strange-looking device, not covering more

than two feet of ground. Some queer levers were in the structure, and two handles, sticking up, inviting a lift. It was so devised that you could measure precisely the weight you pulled—from a few pounds to twelve hundred; yet whilst you pulled yourself up bodily in the act of lifting, the measured poundage of your *own weight* was cunningly deducted. Every muscle in the body was stretched at each single pull. Naturally I set the indicator to the lightest weight first, then gradually increased it. I took a pull at every pause in my work, and in eight days I could feel a marked improvement in my strength. In less than three weeks I could lift nine hundred pounds, and was completely restored to health. This was accomplished without a moment's interruption in my work.

Now, in painting the picture of the Pensioners I had unconsciously freed myself from the Walker influence. This was the more strange as I had no desire nor intention of so doing; but the time at my disposal for the completion of the picture was so short that I could think little of any type of work;

I simply *had* to get those men on to the canvas. As the front figures were just a little under life-size I painted them with a breadth of touch that I had hitherto studiously avoided. When it was finished, however, I began to reflect on its manner of work, and heartily detested the result—for the simple reason, alas, that “it was so unlike Walker.” Further, when I thought of the Academy, I felt equally miserable, arguing with myself that so curious a picture would never be hung. The canvas was literally divided into two parts: the upper all architecture; and the lower all figures—the row of heads forming the central dividing line. It was a section of the Chapel, with all the figures that came *within* that section; it had no beginning and no end; in short, it was no composition.

Some solace came to me when my first patron, Mr. Fry, bought the picture for £1200, and this before it was sent to the Academy. That sum, however, was soon swallowed up in paying off arrears, arising from the expenses occasioned by my wife’s long illness. At last the day came for sending

the picture to the Academy, and I awaited the result with heavy forebodings.

Within a week of sending in I received letters from two members then sitting on Council, congratulating me on my picture. Mr. (afterwards Lord) Leighton—although quite a stranger to me—not only praised it warmly, but analysed the merits of the picture. The other letter was from Mr. George Richmond, who added that when the picture came before them the whole Council clapped their hands enthusiastically.

These letters caused a turmoil of emotions in me. It was a success as overwhelming as unexpected. On the opening of the exhibition practically the whole press burst forth in a unanimous chorus of praise; and my name and work was on the lips of all who had seen the picture. The question seemed to float in the air—Who was this Herkomer, who had thus leapt into ripe work with a bound? Yes, who was he? *I* could not have told them, for I was hourly asking myself the same question, which resolved itself into a painful inquiry as to my next move! I could not go on "leaping" like

this through my life ! These reflections caused a depression in me that counter-balanced the joy I ought to have felt at my success. Yet I can see now how fortunate it was for me that my mind was led that way ; I might have fallen into the other extreme of self-laudation. Wherever I went, and whomsoever I met, it was all congratulations, and again congratulations ! My good friend Pinwell, who had for years been at work on an oil picture for the Academy, said to me : “ You have done the right thing at the right time ” ; and I must mention that all those friends who tried to dissuade me from painting that subject in oils were most ready to acknowledge their mistake.

This picture, only three years later, obtained even a greater success than was meted out to it in the Royal Academy ; and that was at the International Exhibition in Paris, of 1878.

My election as an Associate of the Royal Academy did not take place until 1879 ; therefore in the previous year I was still an “ outsider.” As an outsider I was only allowed to send to Paris two oil pictures and



two water-colours (or black-and-white drawings), whereas the Academicians were each privileged to send ten works in oils. I was therefore represented by my only two available oil pictures, "After the Toil of the Day," and "The Last Muster," and by two water-colours.

This exhibition contained the finest, as well as the largest, collection of English pictures that had ever been seen in France. It caused that country, hitherto so jealous of its artistic supremacy, to acknowledge that England *did* possess artists, and had a national art.

The International Jury first marked the pictures that were to receive the great Medals of Honour, of which ten only were to be given to the world, for art. My name stood on the top of the list; and standing with Millais, I gained an immediate position in the eyes of the world, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have taken years to attain.

At the distribution of awards the recipients of the medals of honour were arranged in double file, and, preceded by the bearer of the Art-Banner, were marched in this order

into the vast hall of the Champs Élysées. I was placed next to Millais—my rightful position.

As we entered the great hall to the stirring strains of military bands, dear old Millais broke out in strong ejaculations: "Ah, this is a big affair!" And again, several times after, he nudged me with his elbow, saying, "Big thing, isn't it?"

We were seated in the front row, facing the innumerable steps that led to the dais, on which sat the President of the Republic, MacMahon.

Millais was altogether a study on that occasion. He kept asking me whether I thought we should have to mount those steps to receive our medals—for he was distinctly nervous at the prospect.

The first man to mount those steps was Meissonier, as President of the International Jury, wearing the embroidered coat of the "Immortals." But it was not until we saw the secretaries of the different countries approach the President that we realized they would receive *all* the medals for their respective countries, for each one returned with



a flat basket under his arm, filled with the prizes. Then Millais heaved a great sigh, and said under his breath, "Thank goodness!"

As Sir Philip Cunliffe Owen, England's secretary, approached us with his basket, I urged Millais to ask him for our medals, as I knew it would take weeks before we got them through the usual official channels. "No," he said, "I don't like to; you ask him!" That was dear, great-hearted Millais all over. It never occurred to him that I was but a youngster, and he the acknowledged head of British art! But I was too young, or perhaps too pushing by nature, to be guided by his example, and consequently straightway asked Sir Philip for our awards. He smilingly acquiesced, and at once began to grope about in his basket—which he had in the meantime placed on the floor—and, with a sort of half-mocking bow, handed us the red leather cases that contained our great medals.

That evening most of those who had received awards or had come to witness the distribution were to cross the Channel. But it happened that it was low tide, which caused the twin-ship, *Calais-Douvres*, to stick in the

mud, just outside the Calais pier. A few of the braver ones (Millais amongst them) ventured to cross in a smaller boat; I dared not, and remained with the rest who had returned to shore, at the Hotel Dessin. The table d'hôte was composed of an array of quiet English people, and it was interesting to see them demurely eating their French dinner, speaking in tones little above a whisper. Two gentlemen sitting opposite me, in discussing the events of the day, expressed a curiosity as to what those Medals of Honour were like; so much at least I could catch from their low-toned conversation. I took the red case from my breast-pocket, saying: "Pardon me, gentlemen, but I have one of those medals here, if you care to see it." They looked at the medal, then they looked at me, and finally, in the most hesitating way, asked whose it was. "Mine," I answered simply. Effect! Of course I then went into details, which caused the other guests to prick up their ears, and soon polite demands were passed along for a peep at the precious thing. So the medal took its round of the table.

After Paris, "The Last Muster" was

exhibited in several Continental exhibitions with unvarying success, carrying off in each the highest award. This concludes the history of "The Last Muster," which I have traced from its incipency to its finality.

But I must now get back to the year when its first appearance in the Royal Academy gave me a sudden position that depressed rather than elated me. I deliberately avoided an English subject in the picture that was to follow, and painted a Bavarian scene called "At Death's Door." When exhibited in the Academy, in the year 1876, it attracted but little notice—one Academician alone speaking to me about it, remarking that it had a "stained-glass aspect." Stained-glass, forsooth! What did he mean? To this day I do not know whether he meant praise or censure. The public and the painters generally were pretty unanimous in their opinion that I had made a mistake in painting a Bavarian subject after my success with one that was essentially English. I certainly lost favour for a few years, but it gave me my artistic freedom, which is my particular joy to this day. The

public may like or dislike what I do, but they cannot anticipate what I am likely to produce. The public voice said at the time, "Follow up your first success"; but my inner voice said, "Restrain!" Maybe the former was right from the standpoint of popularity. But popularity invariably contains the germ of early decay: it allures its victim by smiles and flattery, and destroys it by its frowns. It is capricious, illogical, and unaccountable. Perhaps, at the time, I could not have made all this clear to myself, but I must have felt intuitively the danger that lay before me, otherwise I would hardly have deliberately courted disfavour.

My mental condition at the time presented a curious state. I was hovering between two art-personalities—Walker's and my own! The former had become weaker, and my unconscious assertion of "self"—as exemplified in the Pensioners—had not yet been vitalized. In fact, I could not wholly return to the old, and was not yet secure in the new. It was in this vacillating state of mind that I painted the picture that was to follow "The Last Muster." I tried hard to get back to Walker,

but somehow it would not come off. Although the "hesitating touches" prevailed, and the good qualities were not sufficiently sustained, the picture marks a place of importance in my career.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### DEATH OF MY MOTHER

I WISH I could pass over in silence the next few years of my domestic life ; but to do so would lead the reader to surmise that it had either improved, or that I had become callous—in fact, had learnt to bear my troubles with indifference. Yet conditions had neither improved, nor had I learnt to be indifferent.

My mother could watch these struggles no longer, and desired me to make a home for her and my father in Germany, where they could live peaceably in their old age. Their old age ! Yes, it was my dream to sweeten that ; and now, I thought, by an action of my own choosing I had embittered their last days.

Just before my triumph in Paris my parents left me for the new home that I had arranged for them—an upper flat in a

"Zimmermann's"<sup>1</sup> house in Landsberg-am-Lech, Bavaria, a small town some six miles from our native village, Waal.

The perpetual worries of my home life acted like a rasp. With such odds against me, my enduring powers had at last reached their limit, and I succumbed to an attack of brain-fever. Had it not been for the skill and knowledge of Miss Griffiths (who had, at the urgent request of my wife, thrown in her lot with ours, and had even persuaded her younger sister Margaret to join us) in applying the proper treatment, I might have had my brain permanently impaired in some serious way; as it was, the disease only deprived me of my previous exemption from giddiness at great heights.

For more than six weeks after my illness I was unable to bear the light, and the first work I did, in a dimmed light, with dark blue goggles over my eyes, was to make a model group of the figures for an enormous water-colour I had planned to paint that summer in Ramsau, which I called "Light, Life, and Melody."

<sup>1</sup> A carpenter who does the rougher type of work, for whom we have no equivalent in England.

This brain-fever, coming so soon after my Paris success, caused the world to say I could not stand it. Kind world, how little it knew!

There were now two children—the last a girl. Expenses increased in alarming disproportion to my income, and I was unable to cope with the bills. Money had to be borrowed, for which my father's carved furniture, in addition to a moderate life insurance, was given as security. This borrowed sum was paid off in instalments.

When I was barely convalescent I painted Tennyson at Farringford. I rapidly gained strength whilst on that visit, which I owed to the great kindness I received at the hands of the angelic lady his wife.

In the late summer of that year, during my visit to Ramsau, I painted the principal figures into the large water-colour picture, which measured six feet by five. My health was deplorable, and I could only work in a perfunctory sort of way, which no doubt was the cause of the smaller water-colour work I did being of a slight nature. The large water-colour was altogether a *tour de force*—an experiment that I fortunately never



repeated. I cannot help thinking that there must be a flaw in my brain that drives me to undue size. In my etching (a new art that I had lately taken up, with my usual feverish enthusiasm), I sinned grievously in matters of size; and to this day I have to watch myself lest I get the heads of my portrait-sitters over life-size.

There was a noteworthy reason for painting so large a picture in water-colour rather than in oil. On those painters who commenced their career in water-colour this material keeps an extraordinary hold: it is like a first love, never forgotten, never quite replaced by a new. When I first took seriously to oil-colour I felt as if I were committing bigamy! I pined for my first love, and the knowledge that my career demanded the change did not comfort me, but only lacerated my constancy. I had to argue that although it was a matter of expediency, I did not commit an artistic immorality; that the limitations of water-colour prevented the fuller development of whatever talent I might possess; that I could never hope to reach the top of the tree unless I competed

with the strong, in the strong material; that nothing less, in fact, than successful work in oil-colour could satisfy my ambition as a painter.

These arguments certainly did not err on the side of modesty, but in the main they were right. There were these fitful returns to my first love, always in the hope that I might yet circumvent the necessary change of material; hence my frantic attempts to rival the stronger material, both in size and quality.

The year 1879 was one that marked another corner-stone in my career. A scheme for serious landscape-painting in Wales had long occupied my thoughts, and had been talked over with my friend, Mr. Mansel Lewis—himself an excellent artist. We proposed to camp there for that purpose, and live some weeks with our subject. The life was to combine romanticism with practicable comfort. On the details of this novel scheme I will not dwell here, as it has been fully described in the book, *My School and My Gospel*.

A most unexpected commission now came to hand—to paint the portrait of Lord Stratford

de Redcliffe, for King's College, Cambridge. This commission, which was given me on the strength of my success with the "Chelsea Pensioners," brought me the first proof of the "ticketing" I so dreaded: I was the painter of old men!

Well, my subject certainly was an old man, over ninety. He was bodily an invalid, too, having had to live in his chair, day and night, for some two years before I painted him. Over and above these conditions, the room in which I had to paint faced the south, and received the full sunlight. These were circumstances that might have baffled any experienced portrait-painter. Yet here was I, with no practice in painting portraits in oils, with no experience in matters of procedure, an invalid for my subject, and a room in which to paint that was almost impossible for such a purpose. To this day I wonder how I ever managed to succeed in giving satisfaction to the college authorities. I am not easily daunted, and do not know the day when I was frightened by difficulties, and so it was that I got through this task with respectability.

His Lordship was to be painted in a black coat, and wearing his special orders ; but as an invalid he could not endure that coat for any length of time, and I did not dare to hand him down to posterity in a dressing-gown. I remember that more than half my time was taken up by attending to him as a nurse. Every now and again I would put a touch on the canvas, which I had to lay flat on the floor, in order to get some kind of light by which I could see what I was doing.

In spite of his bodily decrepitude Lord Stratford de Redcliffe was, at that time, still vigorous in mind, dwelling chiefly on subjects of a poetic and philosophical nature. A curious remark remains in my memory as showing how he could idealize a common event. One morning the sun, which as usual streamed through the window, caught the cloth shoe that covered his gouty foot ; he gazed at the shoe awhile, and said to me, " Very kind of old Phoebus to shine on an old Boot."

And now, more than a year after my success in Paris, I was received into the Academy as an Associate.

My election was not altogether flattering, as my majority consisted of two, the opponent who ran me so closely being Miss Thompson, afterwards Lady Butler. One of these two precious votes was given by a member who asked his neighbour on the night of the election, "Who is this Herkomer, anyway; he is a foreigner, isn't he?" He got for answer: "Well, whatever he is, his art is thoroughly British. He's all right; you vote for him." I do not mention this incident to expose a sore; I was only too glad to get into the Academy, and have remained, and will always remain, one of its most devoted and loyal members.

That summer I paid a visit to my parents at Landsberg, and found them most comfortably housed. Many a little bit of decoration and furniture had been made by my father to keep the "Herkomer type" in evidence; but my mother was distinctly failing in health. Having a kind and attentive landlady, she preferred to stay in Landsberg whilst I took my father to Ramsau. I am in possession of a letter written by my father—one of the very few he ever wrote—to friends whilst he

and I were there. In it he speaks touchingly of his anxiety about my mother's health, and adds: "Our mission in life is fulfilled" ("Unsere Aufgabe in dieser Welt ist gelöst"). He meant by this that their mission in life was to help me on the road to success. That having so far been consummated, their great object in life was realized.

In Ramsau I converted a huge barn (standing on a bit of rising ground, a short distance from the village) into a studio. It had large double doors front and back, large enough to allow of the entry of a cart laden with hay, for in South Germany hay is not stacked out of doors, as in England, but kept loose, in great barns. From the front doors I had before me a great poetic landscape, pictorially complete for painting, of pine forest at the base of a mountain which rose, shrine-like, to the heavens. In the foreground stood a little wooden shrine, containing some holy image behind the ornamental grating of wrought iron. This shrine, dedicated to God, and the greater shrine beyond, suggested the title of the picture I painted on a large scale in oils—"God's Shrine."

In this improvised studio I also painted a large water-colour, called "Grandfather's Pet," the last of those attempts to make this medium take the place of the stronger—oils.

I might here just incidentally mention that during these visits to Ramsau I wore the native dress, which has since been adopted by every sickly townsman, young or old, fat or thin. What makes the fraud in the latter case the more objectionable is that the dealers in these costumes fade the tanning of the leather breeches, so as to make them old and worn in appearance. But a certain rough-cast about me suited the disguise—if so it could be called in my case, for was I not a born Bavarian? Further, I spoke the dialect perfectly—indeed, on two occasions I received tips from visitors for giving them directions and information, which sufficiently proved the excellence of my impersonation.

My work during that stay in Ramsau was seriously interrupted by illness, and my condition became so alarming that my father urged me to send for Miss Griffiths. I was suffering from the most painful form of indigestion, the result of wrong and bad diet,

which soon, however, disappeared when that lady cooked—with her own hands—the food that I could assimilate. Thus, with improved health, I completed my work.

We returned to Landsberg, and although my mother was up and about, I could discern a strange change in her—not physical, but spiritual. Her mind seemed to foreshadow her near end. In saying good-bye at the station I could see how intense was the suffering of that parting to her.

On the day before Christmas Eve of that same year, 1879, a letter came to say she was ill, but that I was not to come over, as her illness did not suggest any danger. On Christmas Eve a telegram came to say she was dead !

My domestic unhappiness was a pain to her that tortured every waking moment of her life. But now there was rest for that great loving soul.

I am not a spiritualist, but I cannot refrain from mentioning that at the moment of dissolution there were heard strange knockings in the room—heard by my father and others who were present at my mother's death. Several years after this strange



occurrence, whilst sleeping in the same room, both my present wife and I heard similar sounds at an hour when nobody was about, which, perhaps by a strange coincidence, were the forerunner of a sad event. I place these facts before the reader without comment.

My father came back to my home in England, and our meeting at Victoria Station—he alone—seemed painfully strange to me. He was there, true, but my mind was ever revolving the question—“Why, why is Mother not with him?”

## CHAPTER XIX

### MUTTERTURM, LANDSBERG—CAMPING IN NORTH WALES—PORTRAITURE

I HAD retained the little flat in the “Zimmermann’s” house in Landsberg where my mother died. On visiting the place the following year with my father a strange impulse took hold of me which must be related. But before I go into closer details it will be necessary to give the reader an idea of the locality.

Landsberg, on the River Lech, Bavaria, is six miles from our native village, Waal. Although it has only six thousand inhabitants—which in many parts of England would be considered a mere village—it has its mayor, and municipal arrangements such as you usually find in a town of thirty to forty thousand inhabitants in this country. A little branch railway connects it with the

main line between Munich and Lindau. The main part of Landsberg still retains its medieval character. For over three hundred years its gabled houses have stood intact, all additional building being restricted to the outer parts of the town.

The "Zimmermann's" house stood near the border—on the western side—of the swiftly flowing river Lech, from which side one obtained a panoramic view of the old town on the opposite side. In front of this house stood the big shed—his workshop—with long, uncut timber lying about, and the ground strewn with chips made in squaring the beams for roof-structures. Within fifty yards of the house flowed a little stream of crystal clearness, which separated the "Zimmermann's" property from that of his neighbour, the miller. This stream was utilized by the miller for floating timber into his mill, where it was cut into boards, the same water moving a great wheel that constituted the motive power for driving the machinery. The same power answered also for the corn-mill that was above the sawmill.

As I stood contemplating that little double

property, amounting to about two and a half acres, the thought flashed across my mind to become the possessor of it one day, and to build a tower to the memory of my mother by the side of the house in which she died, and to give it the name "Mutterturm." My father was much touched by the thought, but was not quite happy about its financial side. I assured him that that was all arranged in my mind. I would only buy a bit of ground, just enough to take the tower, and only build as much each year as I could afford. The "Zimmermann" readily sold me the few yards of ground I needed to start my scheme, and I straightway designed the ground plan by placing chips on the ground, from which design, as it happened, I never deviated. The idea was settled: its consummation was only a matter of time. That same year the foundations were put in, and the structure rose to some six feet above the ground. There I stopped, as it was all I could afford for that season. The next year it rose farther, and so through several seasons until it reached its destined height of one hundred feet. Meanwhile I was able to buy the house

belonging to the "Zimmermann," with its ground, and likewise the mill. When the latter was pulled down, and the wheel removed, the stream tumbled down over rocks to a depth of twenty feet, in a most entrancing fashion. One disconcerting item remained : there was a right of way by the edge of the river, just below my tower. It was town property, which they could not sell. But they got out of their difficulty by the graceful act of presenting that pathway to me.

The laying-out of the grounds needed early attention ; and during a cold winter I planted a copse of trees in front of the house, mostly spruce, varied by a few oak trees with trunks some fifteen inches in diameter. Although the transplanted trees were of large dimensions I lost but few, and gained sixty or more years of growth.

There are six rooms in the tower, one to each story, which are reached by a winding staircase. The principal room is on the first floor. There, in a place of honour, hangs the portrait of my mother, the only painting she allowed me to make of her, and which was done only a few hours before she left England

never to return again. The room above is devoted entirely to relics of my parents.

I must now refer to the art work of that year, 1879, of which it is only necessary to mention a portrait of John Ruskin in water-colours, which I presented, some years later, to the National Portrait Gallery of London.

I was now greatly interested in my etching experiments. What etcher has not felt the excitement that accompanies the first plunge into this art? Time, food, damage to hands, to carpet and furniture are alike scorned. How he is struck with wonder when he sees the first print of his plate! Those lines that he scribbled on the black ground in a few moments have become, by the magic of the acid, full of expression; and the superb quality of those lines, when printed, makes him tingle all over! So the rhapsody proceeds—at first!

I never acquired the sensible habit of obtaining technical hints on a new art before I plunged into it; it was always “to do the thing, and then find out *how* to do it.” That is somewhat akin to the taking of drugs without understanding their properties. A

well-known doctor once declared that "the taking of drugs is like going into a dark room with a club to attack a burglar, and hitting right and left. One *may* hit the burglar by chance, but one is *sure* to damage the furniture." Well, in every sense of the word I damaged things around me when I first took up etching, and did not, at least for some time, get at the real meaning of the art, aesthetically or technically. In my mezzotint experiments I had no option but to blunder along in my usual way, as the engravers were extremely exclusive. All the help I could get in this latter art was from my printer, whose knowledge was at second hand.

Of our first camping in Wales little need be said, as it was only partially successful, owing to our attempting to live, work, and sleep in the one tent. This was obviously a mistake, as we soon discovered; and I determined for the next year to have some specially constructed huts made for the painting of our large landscapes.

As I knew the painting of one landscape would not give me sufficient occupation for so many weeks, I took with me all the

paraphernalia of the etcher—plates, grounds, dishes, acids, and a small printing-press (an invention of Mr. Hamerton's). This wretched little contrivance proved utterly inadequate for my work. In order to get a decent impression we tightened the rollers to their last gasp, and then we dragged the whole machine around the tent in the vain attempt to turn the toy handles. Still, it was under those circumstances that I did—what I consider my best etching—a portrait of (the handy model) myself, with my two children in the lower corner of the plate.

In the spring of the year 1880 we pitched our camp in that wild, desolate spot, Lake Idwal; and one more tent was added for my father. The newly-invented huts proved eminently successful; and as Lewis and I had separate painting-huts, our dwelling-tent, which was no longer polluted by the smell of oil-paint and varnish, became a charming and comfortable retreat. We stayed ten weeks on the spot—until, in fact, the approaching summer changed the grass from russet to green, and wholly transformed the aspect of what we had been painting. The large



landscape I produced during that stay was one I called "The Gloom of Idwal."

In those wild regions of Wales any one with sensitiveness to nature's influences would have found the life we led in camp most delightful and inspiring—the nights, above all, were most weird and alluring.

Well, *weird* is a mild word for the conditions on the first night, when a storm was raging outside. We got up, dressed, and awaited disaster to our tent. But as nothing happened, I learnt to know the tent's enduring powers, and henceforth slept soundly, being often surprised in the morning to hear that it had been a dreadful night.

I describe this locality thus in the book already referred to : "What English landscape-painter does not know this region of Lake Idwal, with its forbidding aspect, and its utter absence of all leafage? Impressive and almost terrifying under certain conditions of cloud and wind, that amphitheatre of dark rock, sloping down to the black pool of Idwal, cannot be grasped in all its character by the casual visitor, be he painter or layman. He must *live* there. He must be able to linger after

the sun has cast its last rays in a single line of red across the grim 'Devil's Kitchen,' with all the rest in deep gloom ! He must be able to watch the wind-swept clouds tearing across the face of the moon ; and he must be a witness of the dawn, with its low-lying mists that change the familiar scene out of all recognition. *Then* he will begin to grasp the essentials of that poetic spot.

"I doubt if it has been adequately rendered by painter. The early Welsh bards gave its character in words. It was certainly felt by Taliesin, when he thundered out his 'Ode to the Wind' in the seventh century. No change has taken place in the aspect of Idwal since those days ; and, beyond a fallen rock or two, it is now as it was when the giant bard stood there to deliver his message. Idwal must be seen in its wild mood ; in the sunny days of summer it carries a false face—as false as that of a woman who is rouged and powdered !"

Through the winter of that year and the early part of the next I painted the large oil picture called "Missing." It was a scene outside the dockyard gates at Portsmouth,

and represented the crowd of anxious inquirers after a long-overdue ship. Alas, the great red brick wall that formed the background was the initial cause of my having another, but thank goodness the last, relapse of "Purplitis"; to make matters worse I painted the picture against the studio wall, which had been covered with *purple* cloth. Naturally, the red brick wall became a *purple wall* and that fatal colour dominated the tone of the whole picture.

Seventeen years after, when I again saw this picture, at the house of the owner, a kind of fury and shame overcame me; fury, that I should have allowed myself to have lapsed into an old error; and shame, that I should have permitted my good friend to have become its possessor. I recovered my calm, however, when my friend agreed to exchange it for my last important work (for which I had refused several offers), entitled "Our Village." I then took the picture "Missing" home, and burnt it with savage delight! If this exchange should be pronounced as "Bad Business," I answer that it was doubly "Good Conscience."

In the following year, 1881, the company in our camp amounted to eight souls—living in the wild region of Idwal during the months of April and May. For the ladies and children I had a tent made of special construction, with divisions for sleeping, living, and cooking accommodation.

To get at my subject that year I had to bring into play a little engineering, in order to place my hut at the proper point of sight, which was from the centre of the river. I accomplished this by placing nine beams, of twenty-four feet length, across the stream from bank to bank; and it was on these beams that I placed my “revolving painting-hut.” As the little river passed directly under it, I allowed five feet for a probable rise of water; but one day there was a rise of over six feet, causing the water to dash angrily against the front panelling of the hut, and flood my floor. But as I never left anything on the floor, and always had my picture a foot above it, no damage was done within; and without, hut and beams remained intact.

As I had not painted such a stream before, it was an epicurean pleasure to be able to

watch, with all bodily comforts, the strange antics of that mountain stream from behind a plate-glass window. I used to take snapshots of it, not with a camera, but by the quick opening and shutting of my eyes. Although the water that tumbled over those rocks was never two days alike, either in volume or colour, I found I could, by such constant watching, secure a natural average in actual drawing that suggested more than an arrested instant in the motion.

The instantaneous photographs of water in action always seemed to me to leave out the suggestion of the *next movement*. Further, the camera brings into prominence certain surface forms that, to the painter's eye, seem non-essentials, simply because it cannot differentiate between the opaque and the transparent tones in nature. At first glance, photographs of water seem wonderful, and most painters have hoped to get assistance from them. But they only baffle the artist when the practical test is applied. No, I think the snapshot of the eyes (both eyes working together) is more serviceable, and is certainly in closer connection with the brain.

The stream in its circuitous course tumbled over rocks, under which it formed a deep, dark pool, swirling round in beautiful lines, bejewelled by prismatic bubbles and foam, and finally rushed out of the very centre under my hut. On either side were lichen-covered boulders, first large, then diminishing in size, until they lost themselves in the deep tones of the distant, cloud-capped mountain-side. The sky, which played an unimportant part in the design, was kept simple—a subterfuge usually employed by figure-painters when they paint landscape.

Here was a subject with all the elements of a poetic and romantic landscape. With the exception of a little modification in the lines of composition, it only needed *doing*. It may have been just this convenient housing whilst painting that caused me, perhaps, to give it too much of a “doing,” for I am aware of the rather “heavy-handedness” in the technique ; but it was an earnest attempt to give the great characteristic of rock—*weight* !

Our camp that year was a merry one. The ladies and children thoroughly enjoyed the absence of all necessity to dress up. They

wore mostly waterproofs from head to foot, for Wales at that time of year is a formidable rival to Scotland for rain-power.

We had practically pitched our tents on a bog ; but the wooden floors of the tents were a full twelve inches above the ground ; further, two layers of canvas (with an air-space between) at the sides, three over the roof, and four plate-glass windows, kept out all dampness. Around the tents the ground was unquestionably a bit treacherous, and the available terra firma had to be known—a knowledge often dearly bought. Our servant, who prided himself on being able to cross the bog in the dark, was one day carrying the little girl on his back when one of his legs sank in the bog to over his knee and transfixed him. Rescue was at hand, and the child, who still clung to his back, being first removed, two of us pulled the servant out of the quagmire.

As no lights had ever been seen on that spot before, their first appearance opened the flood-gates of superstition in the neighbourhood. But reassurance was made manifest when, on a dark night, some natives tampered

with our cask of petroleum (a spirit we used for heating and cooking), thinking it was beer.

It was during this camping that I made the resolve henceforth to devote myself chiefly to portraiture. With the exception of that unaccountable commission, so early in my career, to paint Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, I had only received one order. The absence of commissions can easily be accounted for by the fact that my name had hitherto been attached to subject and landscape work. It was therefore necessary to do a specimen portrait, and for that purpose I selected my friend Archibald Forbes, the war correspondent.

Forbes sat to me in the summer of that same year, and strangely enough, whilst I was at work upon his portrait, I received three unsolicited portrait commissions—the late Master of Trinity, Cambridge, Dr. Thompson; Mr. Staats Forbes; and a Welsh gentleman. The portraits of Archibald Forbes, Thompson, and the Welsh gentleman were exhibited in the Academy the following year, and that of Mr. Staats Forbes in the Grosvenor.

But it was the Archibald Forbes that made



the mark, and started my career as a portrait painter. Standing erect, dressed in self-designed khaki jacket, with hands behind him, he was the very incarnation of strong manhood; with a striking brow, regular features, and a square-set jaw, he showed power in every line.

Now, it happened that the first commissions obtained through this portrait were all from gentlemen who thought they resembled Forbes, especially in the manly bearing, and requested to be similarly represented. I did my best to make heroes of them all; but I did more for myself by straining every nerve to master my new craft.

I was indeed considerably at sea when I started on the war correspondent, and at one stage the work was in such a hopeless state that my father questioned my ability to pull it through. This very doubt on his part was just the tonic I needed, and I *did* pull it through—to some purpose.

That was a period—which lasted a decade and more—when the patronage of art in England was at its height. Everybody in any position and possessing wealth, newly acquired

or otherwise, was desirous of being painted. The few portrait painters then practising were more than fully employed. Present conditions are very different, the sitters having decreased, and the portrait painters disproportionately increased.

## CHAPTER XX

### DEATH OF MY WIFE

IN the late autumn of the year 1881 a change was effected in my domestic arrangements. Owing to the delicacy of my wife's lungs she was ordered to spend the winter at Wiesbaden, and it was decided that Miss Margaret Griffiths and my boy Siegfried should accompany her. From there, in the following summer, they went to Norderney. At the end of July the whole family met in Ramsau, where we made a stay of some two months.

My father had by this time become somewhat reconciled to his loss, and the love we all showered on him made him feel how much there was yet to live for ; besides, he was with me, and I was the pivot upon which his existence turned. Our positions to each other had, at his own suggestion many years

before, been reversed, when he uttered the remarkable words, "You and I now change places ; you have more experience and knowledge than I, therefore I look to you henceforth for guidance, and I will obey you."

On this visit to Ramsau I painted several oil-colour pictures, of medium dimensions, the subjects being of a dramatic character, one or two of which I had already drawn for *The Graphic*.

I must hasten over the next domestic events. Whilst at Norderney my wife had met a doctor in whose skill she had an almost superstitious belief, and she desired to settle near him in Vienna, where he practised. It was therefore arranged that Miss Griffiths, as well as the two children, should accompany her.

The wife being comfortably settled in Vienna accordingly, all things went smoothly at first. My father and I had in the meanwhile gone to America, where I very soon plunged into portrait work. In the spring of the following year, 1883, news came that my wife had caught a chill, and that complications were feared. As only evasive

answers were sent to my repeated telegrams asking for the truth about her illness, we abruptly cut our visit short, and took the first available steamer to Europe, for the suspense had become intolerable. This sudden departure caused many portrait orders to remain over for another visit.

On landing at Liverpool we were met by Miss Griffiths' elder brother with the news that my wife had died the day before of galloping consumption. We just touched Bushey, and then hurried to Vienna, accompanied by Miss Griffiths, where we found Margaret worn with the strain of the terrible nursing, but, although bereft of the power of sleep, courageously keeping up. The two children had scared looks still upon them; there was the black atmosphere of death pervading the whole dwelling—albeit that my wife had been buried two days before our arrival.

Margaret's endurance against almost inhuman odds was preternatural, and all she went through with her charge will never be known—for noble women speak but little of the good work they do. That she lived through

it all—and lives *now* to bless my life—is little short of miraculous !

Miss Griffiths, my father and the two children then returned to Bushey : Margaret and her younger brother, who had come over to help her, accompanied me on a little tour through the interesting cities of Germany, after which we returned to Bushey.

Life all anew seemed so strange. What was it that was missed ? A mother ? The children, owing to the unusual circumstances, had had scarce a mother other than the sisters Griffiths, each to a child. A wife ? Never, poor soul, was she able to be wife to me. I was a widower, yet had not known true wife. No blame to her—she was not responsible ! Pitiful the whole history, pitiful the mistake made, and pitiful the result of that mistake. I take it all on myself, for it was I who made the mistake, and with open eyes !

**PORTRAIT OF MISS KATHERINE GRANT.**

**(Oil Painting, 1885.)**





## CHAPTER XXI

THE HERKOMER SCHOOL—PORTRAIT OF MISS  
KATHERINE GRANT (“LADY IN WHITE”)  
—MY MARRIAGE WITH MISS GRIFFITHS

ON my return to Bushey I was at once engaged on portraits ; I was likewise occupied with the picture, “Pressing to the West,” which had been begun in New York during my first visit. It represented emigrants housed in “Castle Gardens” prior to being sent westward. The extraordinary medley of nationalities interested me ; but the subject touched me in another way that was more personal. Here I saw the emigrant’s life and hardships—conditions in which my parents found themselves when they left the Fatherland for this Land of Promise. But between that date and the time when I witnessed that heterogeneous mass of humanity this asylum had been given them for their protection against sharpers. I

have already alluded to this building as having once served as the fashionable concert-room of New York, in which Jenny Lind made her debut. My picture of the emigrants found a permanent home in the National Gallery of Leipzig, after having been exhibited in our Academy and other places.

But by far the most important event of this year was the inauguration of the "Herkomer School." For the details of this occurrence I must again refer the reader to my book, *My School and My Gospel*.

I now pass on to the year 1884, which was so important to me, artistically and domestically. My portrait of Miss Grant—otherwise known as "The Lady in White"—was painted in that year, likewise my large landscape called "Found," which was bought for the nation. I must go a little into detail regarding the former.

The unusual success of this portrait in England, Germany, Austria, France, and America was as puzzling as it was gratifying to me. In the last four countries it was awarded first-class gold medals, and to this day, in Germany, it is the best-remembered

portrait ever exhibited. I visited Berlin when it was first exhibited there, and having but a day for sight-seeing I engaged a guide. Without my having given him my name he suggested—when we were making out the day's programme—that I must visit the exhibition of pictures, where, he said, "There is a portrait by an Englishman that all Berlin is talking about." In our rounds we took this exhibition early in the day—soon, in fact, after the gallery was opened to the public; therefore we had the room almost to ourselves. The guide took me straight up to my portrait, and on my expressing surprise at seeing so many chairs placed in front of it—I think I counted some fifty—he told me that people came there of an afternoon and "sat for hours"—his words—contemplating this "Lady in White."

The painting of the portrait came about in this wise. As I had so far only received commissions for men's portraits, arising, no doubt, from my first portrait having been that of a man—Archibald Forbes—it began to be voiced about that I could paint a man, but not a woman. I naturally wished to remove this odium, as I was considerably piqued. To this

end I selected a friend, Miss Katherine Grant—the youngest daughter of Mr. Owen Grant—an English, and not an American lady as it has been so persistently stated. She was sympathetic to me as a personality, and attractive as a type of female beauty. The white muslin dress she wore, which was of her own devising, followed no particular fashion; and with the exception of the long tawny-coloured gloves—then all the rage—there was nothing to indicate a date in her appearance.

The selection of a white background was to a considerable extent owing to an accident. I began the portrait with a dark background; but finding that the sitter's somewhat colourless complexion was made too pronounced by the contrast, I one day—as an experiment—placed a white canvas behind her, allowing one part of it to touch the back of the small chair upon which she was sitting. The transformation of the whole aspect of the sitter was remarkable. The face assumed a delicate warm tint, and her telling dark eyes and black hair became dominant notes in the scheme. The white canvas, being placed so near her, received

incisive shadows from her head and figure ; the rest was graduated in subtle bluish hues, which gave sufficient contrast to the cream white of the dress to give the latter delicate relief.

The scheme of white on white was universally acclaimed to constitute the originality of the portrait. But Bastien Lepage, in his small portrait of Sarah Bernhardt, had already solved that problem, and with dazzling virtuosity.

In the spring of the year 1884 (accompanied by Mr. Mansel Lewis and my father) I camped once more, and for the last time, in Wales. Somewhat up from the road, and on the slope of a hill-side—where the necessary level ground for the pitching of our tents and painting-huts had to be made with pickaxe and shovel—I painted the landscape which now hangs in the Tate Gallery, entitled “Found.”

But an event of solemn import was awaiting me this same year. Miss Lulu Griffiths consented to be my wife, and we were married from her home in Ruthin in August.

The overwhelming serenity that followed on this marriage almost frightened me. From

long familiarity with irremediable sorrows I had contracted the habit of looking for the grim shade—trouble. The new conditions were all so wonderful, so like the dreams and longings I had had through the weary years. Lulu, as my wife, was so much to me. She was my counsellor ; she raised the status of my social life by her innate comprehension of the duties of hostess ; she foresaw the recognition that would come to my lot, and the course I was to follow in the world—things hidden from my mental view at that time. She was true helpmeet, and with that sentence all is said.

But this unalloyed happiness was only destined to be a “curtain-raiser” in my new life. The real drama was still to come, and that in deadly earnest !

My first work in the early spring of 1885 worth mentioning was the picture I called “Hard Times : 1885.” It articulated a distress amongst the labouring classes, poignantly felt by them that year. Hundreds of honest labourers wandered through the country in search of work ; the man, with pickaxe and shovel tied together—his only stock-in-trade—

and his bulky bundle of household goods (that had escaped the pawnbroker) slung across his strong shoulders ; the woman following, with smaller bundle hanging from the wrist of the arm that supported the babe wrapped in her shawl ; and the other little ones trudging after father and mother as best they could, giving a diminishing line to the wretched procession.

It was such a group, resting by the wayside of a country lane, that I depicted. The lane, with winding roadway and high untrimmed hedges of hawthorn, lay at my very door at Bushey. It was named by the students "Hard Times Lane," and to this day is known by that designation.

I was now about to make the doubtful experiment of producing forty pictures and sketches for the Fine Art Society (London) of "Life and Labour in the Bavarian Alps." These were, moreover, to be the product of one single summer, as the exhibition had been fixed for the late autumn of the same year, 1885. In addition to a time-limit not made by myself (new and irritating as it was to me), there was the inclusion of so-called "sketches,"

that disturbed me on the score of honesty. I was not a sketcher ; I had deliberately avoided acquiring that facility, for reasons already stated. I could not, and cannot to this day, sit down and make an irresponsible sketch. "Make a picture of everything you do"—that was the Walkerian shibboleth ; and from habits of thought and work it has soaked itself into my nature.

Having formed this habit of making a picture of everything I did, and moreover of making the one effort final, I was never able to use a sketch satisfactorily. The backgrounds of my "Last Muster" and "Charterhouse Chapel" left me no option, and I had to work from carefully painted water-colour sketches. But in both cases I could (and did) go constantly to study the originals, which enabled me to correct the deficiencies that crept in through the (to me) unnatural procedure of work.

I had always held the opinion that if a painter wished to *start* a deterioration in his art he had only to undertake a given number of *new* works within a *certain* period. And now I had voluntarily exposed myself to that



dangerous undertaking, choosing Ramsau again for the subjects of my pictures.

However, I faced it all in the most practicable way. To produce this *number* of pictures in a given time, all interruption in work through inclement weather had to be provided against, and that meant building a studio. The "Zimmermann" had much difficulty in getting a bit of ground for its erection. None of the peasants would spare an inch of their precious fields, and all he could secure was a piece of ground that was useless to the owner owing to its conformation. With some manipulation it only just sufficed for a little studio of about fourteen feet by twelve, with a small glass-house attached. Although near the house we lived in, it was approached by a path so steep that one thought twice before undertaking the journey.

The migration of the whole family to Ramsau was delayed until August, so as to allow my wife to recover from a distressing *fausse couche*—distressing I say, because a life was given for a life. She had needed some change, and the doctor advised me to take her to some quiet town. Soon after our arrival,

whilst I was making a purchase in a shop, she remained outside. Suddenly she saw a child knocked down by a horse carelessly driven. Without a thought of her condition she darted out and rescued the child just in the nick of time, and so prevented the wheels of the cart passing over the little body. It all happened so suddenly that I knew nothing of what had occurred until I came out of the shop. The child was quite unhurt ; but that same night Lulu's child was born dead.

In August then, my wife, Margaret, the two children and my father settled in Ramsau. The visit started badly. The house in which we lived had been the old schoolhouse, but a new building for school purposes had been erected next door. As our house was just short of one bedroom, Margaret slept in the one adjoining. The morning after the first night she awoke with a painful throat accompanied by high fever—diphtheria ! Her sister at once isolated her, covered the door with a sheet dipped in some disinfectant, and gave herself up entirely to the nursing. On inquiry it transpired that twelve months previously a child had died in the room and in the very

bed that Margaret occupied. The landlady declared that everything had been *washed* and the room thoroughly cleaned; but this microbe laughs at water.

Well, *that* passed, and things became normal again. In figures to paint Ramsau was particularly rich—one family alone supplying me with ten models, of all ages—and endless “bits” of background were ready at hand. But to me the most picturesque figure and paintable background had little value until I had formed a definite idea of a treatment—in short, until they were formulated in my mind as a subject, however simple. In looking back I am somewhat surprised that I did not paint single figures without an attempt at converting them into some kind of subject—merely character-painting. I could have done this very well and quickly, but I probably thought such studies of single figures did not fulfil the demands of the “sketch.”

When a month had passed I found I had not got half my *number*. This alarmed me; and the feverish search for subjects began afresh. I made scouts of my family, who searched and reported. Then in reviewing

what had so far been done I could plainly see that the slighter drawings were simply unfinished little pictures, and the more elaborate subjects were hurriedly and imperfectly done. But I could not permit myself to go back on such work for further development or improvement ; more, more, my *number* ! How I cursed that word !

My wife's heart was now beginning to develop some alarming symptoms. When a girl she had had rheumatic fever, which left the heart permanently damaged. But it never seemed to give her much trouble, nor had she ever allowed any temporary disturbance in that organ to interfere with her life's work. There was now, however, a change that boded no good, and I attributed this new phase to the extra strain put on the heart by her late *fausse couche*.

Not only were we all longing to get away from that enervating climate, but I was more than anxious to get my wife home. After a sojourn of seven weeks, full of anxieties and irritating work, we left for home.

## CHAPTER XXII

### DEATH OF MY WIFE LULU

THERE were still some five weeks before the opening of the exhibition, which gave me ample time to “tinker” my *number*. At last the day came for arranging the series of pictures and “sketches” in the gallery of the Fine Art Society.

I left my wife in bed, as she had not been well, and urged her not to get up until I came back. She encouraged me to go to town without anxiety ; she wished me success with my exhibition ; and then we talked awhile of our proposed visit to America in December, as I had received a letter from an eminent specialist that very morning, saying that my wife would run no undue risk in undertaking the journey—that, on the contrary, it might prove beneficial. Oh ! the comfort a doctor’s word *can* mean to poor suffering mankind !

After a long, weary day at the Gallery, I returned by a train arriving something after six o'clock in the evening. Our doctor met me at Bushey station, and, linking his arm in mine, said, "Mrs. Herkomer is dangerously ill." He said no more, but hurried me into a cab. From his ill-disguised emotion I knew, I felt, what was awaiting me. On arrival at the house I found Margaret, my father, my nephew, and even the servants awaiting me in the hall of our little cottage, Dyreham (dear home). The hasty question to my father (spoken in German), "Is it over?" was answered by an affirmative nod of the head, for he was weeping too bitterly to speak. I rushed upstairs alone; there on the bed lay my blessed wife, dead, with the broad bandage still on to keep the dead jaw in its living position. She lay just where I left her in the morning, when she was so full of concern for *me*, so encouraging, so wise in her counsels, when she promised not to leave her bed until I returned, to please *me*. Yet it was less than an hour before I came back that death snatched her from us all. One hour earlier, and I could have heard her speak; one hour earlier, and I

might have held my living wife in my arms ; cruel, that one commonplace hour should deprive me of all—all—counsellor, wife, helpmeet ! And cruel was that short hour to those others, to my father, and to Margaret. The suddenness of the death struck terror into their hearts, which increased with the sickening waiting for my return. They feared the effect this calamity would have on me ; but the very terror written on every line of their faces showed me my path of duty. The dead was at peace ; but peace had to be brought to the living, and I alone could do *that*. This proved my salvation.

. . . . .

I have had occasion to speak of the strange “knockings” that were heard in the room in which my mother died, a few minutes before she passed away ; and again of a similar singularity on two consecutive mornings when I slept in the same room some years after ; which latter, by some strange coincidence—or call it what you will—was the herald of a sad mishap.

I must now relate a third repetition of these “knockings,” which happened shortly before

Lulu died. In Margaret's own words this is what occurred : " On the day of her death Lulu felt oppressed in her breathing, and constantly urged me to help her to a sitting posture in the bed. Finding pillows no longer sufficed, I supported her against myself. Late in the afternoon her struggle in breathing became worse, and she begged to be held more and more upright. Feeling alarmed, I insisted on getting some brandy, to which she had a great aversion. In descending the stairs I heard a violent knocking on the closed shutters of the dining-room" (which was just underneath my wife's bedroom) ; " this strange knocking was heard simultaneously by the butler, who came running out from his pantry 'to catch,' as he said, 'the boys that played the trick.' Rushing out suddenly, he could find no trace of anybody. I had in the meantime hurried back to Lulu, and had given her some of the brandy. But it had no effect. Within a few minutes of taking the brandy, and whilst I was supporting her, she said, 'I feel as if I were going to faint.' Hardly had she uttered the words when she gave a great gasp, and



throwing her head violently back, fell heavily into my arms ; all was over ! From the time when I heard the ‘ knockings ’ to the moment of her death, *not more than ten minutes could have elapsed.*”

There being no available data for such phenomena, comment would be out of place. I merely state the plain facts.

It required all the will-power I possessed to retain the grip of life. To give confidence and peace to those around me, and to suppress my own anguish at the same time, was as severe a strain as could be put upon a man. Work, work, incessant, unremitting—to mock the situation and benumb the heart ! Work, to save me from bitterness and from indifference to life ! This I dinned into my soul every waking moment. And work there was at hand. My school needed attention ; the students had to be individually directed as to their studies during my absence in America. A new field of activity also lay before me, for I had been elected Slade Professor in the University of Oxford. In one matter I was at rest ; Margaret had promised to remain to direct the household and help

the children. On the seventh of December my father and I crossed over to America, whilst Margaret took the children to her home in Wales, where she intended to remain until my return.

That a reaction should some time or other set in was inevitable; and hardly had I landed when my health broke down utterly. At the hotel my father once more watched over me as in those early days. Friends, however, soon came, and vied with each other in kind offices. But sympathy and kindness were also shown me by persons little suspected of such sentiments—the interviewers. They came the moment they heard of my arrival. I sent them a message that I was under a cloud of great domestic sorrow, begging them to desist from trying to see me. They returned an answer full of sympathy, adding that if there was anything they could do for me I was to command them. They never again, during my whole visit, attempted to interview me.

In a narrative of a life so full, so strenuous, and so full of extremes in both joys and sorrows, it is somewhat difficult to decide

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on the appropriate moment for the ending of a first volume. As the death of my wife Lulu was a crisis, affecting in every way my whole existence, it may be as well to break the story of my life here. .